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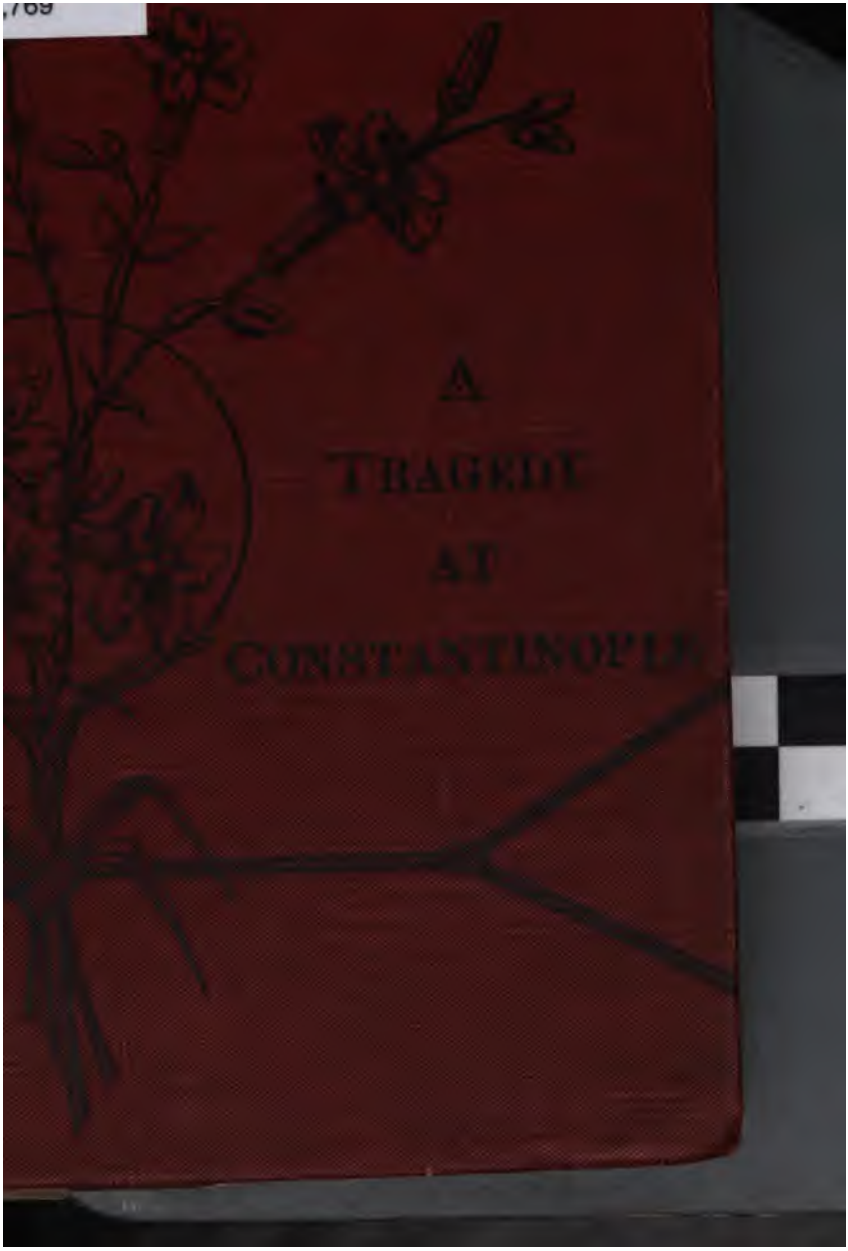
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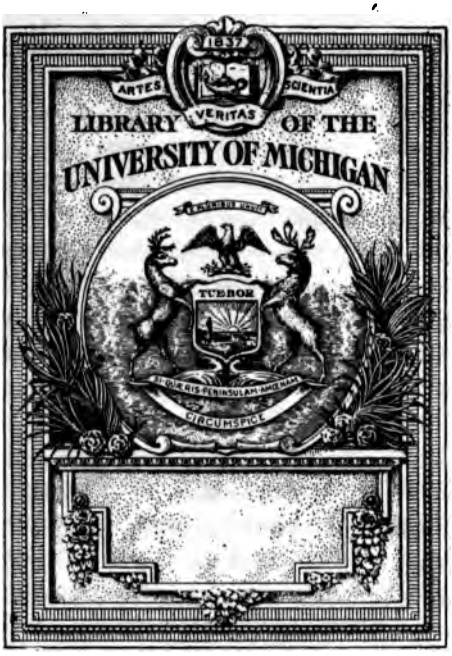
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A
TRAGEDY
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A TRAGEDY AT CONSTANTINOPLE

BY

Leila Hanoum

FROM THE SPANISH BY GEN. R. E. COLSTON

NEW YORK
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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE Mussulman world is of great and peculiar interest at this moment, and in spite of some signs of apparent decline it still possesses immense vitality. An important movement is stirring up its depths. While other races are marshalling their forces either for conquest or self-defence under the banners of Pan-Slavism, Pan-Germanism, etc., the followers of the Prophet are waking to the cry of Pan-Islamism, and their total number is near two hundred millions.—The "Eastern Question" is not settled and never will be, until Russia has carried out the testament of Peter the Great, and the Greek cross has supplanted the crescent on the cupola of St. Sophia. Pretexts are easily found for new wars—and at this very moment (June, 1883) Russia announces that she is compelled to seek in Armenia an equivalent for the British occupation of Egypt. There is no peaceful solution of the Eastern question so long as the Turks occupy provinces in Europe, or even in Asia where they form only one-seventh or eighth of the population—the rest being Christians. But there is little doubt that before being finally driven from Europe, the Turks will make a desperate and supreme effort and call to their aid the thirty millions of Mohammedans from Egypt, Tunis, Algiers, and Morocco, and perhaps the forty-two millions of British India, to unite in a general league against Christian encroachments. The East

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is the land of surprises where the impossible may always be expected to happen. A new prophet may arise at any moment with a new revelation. He may come from the Soudan, or from Mecca claiming to be a lineal descendant of Mohammed, or the present Sultan himself may take the leadership of the movement. He is said to have turned violently against modern progress and to have surrounded himself with the most fanatical sheikhs and ulemas among the clergy. The masses of the people are almost as ready now to believe in a new prophet as they were in the days of Mohammed, and the conquest of Tunis and of Egypt by France and England has revived hostility towards Christians—not without good cause.

In view of these near probabilities I have ventured to place this book before the American public as being of present and actual interest. Having dwelt six years in Egypt, in the military service of the ex-Khedive, Ismaïl-Pasha, I can confidently assert that the reader will find here one of the most faithful and graphic delineations of Moslem society. It is an historical novel of our own times. The author was living in Constantinople when the events took place.

Abdul-Aziz, Mourad V., Midhat-Pasha, Hussein-Avni, Reshid Riza, and Mahmoud-Pashas, Hassan-Bey and others are all strictly historical, and some of them are still living. The story of the revolution and the deposition of Abdul-Aziz is graphically told. The author gives the *official* version of the death of Abdul-Aziz and in this departs from historical truth. I was in the East at the time, and know that no one believed the story of his suicide though vouched for by official commissions. Within the last two years (July 1881) the

present Sultan, Abdul-Hamid, brought to trial the murderers of his uncle. Midhat-Pasha confessed the deed excusing it under the plea of State necessity. He is now in banishment in the Hegaz with a number of his accomplices.

The account given of Hassan-Bey's terrible vengeance and subsequent fate is not in the least exaggerated—but is a correct account of the facts just as they occurred. The intercession of England saved the life of Midhat-Pasha—the ablest of Turkish statesmen, perhaps to take part some day in another revolution. The hapless Mourad passed from captivity to the throne—only to become insane within a few days. His life has been spared—but continual conspiracies are formed by malcontents, who assert (perhaps truthfully) that he has recovered his reason, and who wish to replace him on the throne for their own purposes. Abdul-Hamid lives in perpetual dread of plots and assassins—and when another palace-revolution occurs, his fate will be that of Abdul-Aziz—such is the inevitable fruit of absolutely despotic institutions.

The Moslem world is so different from ours in nearly every respect that it may be said to be almost unknown. No one that has not lived for years in a Mohammedan country can fully understand its strange customs, ideas, and modes of thought.

The Koran regulates all the domestic life of the Mussulmans, and the harem is placed under its sanction and safeguard; and as it gives to the master entire and absolute possession of all the women in his harem, it makes no discrimination between the children born in it, whether of a wife or a slave. They are all equally legitimate and have equal rights.

The Mohammedan laws and customs of marriage and divorce are very similar to those of the ancient Hebrews, and the manners and ideas as well as the morals of the Mussulmans, with regard to women, are very much such as are pictured in Scripture of Abraham, Jacob, David, and Solomon, and a host of other patriarchs. Yet, Mohammed's legislation was a limitation of the system of polygamy existing before his day. Solomon had seven hundred wives, according to Scripture. The Mussulman law limits to four the number of a man's *titular* wives, but it gives him entire possession, if he desires it, of all the women in his harem, whether wives or slaves. Their number is limited only by the means of support.

It is true that of the vast number of women, nine-tenths are mere servants and menials for the favorites, but any one may be raised to the rank of a favorite, or even a wife, by the master's caprice; for if he has already four wives, he has only to utter a single word to divorce one and make room for a new favorite. It is said that Mussulman women, knowing no other state of society, are generally contented with their condition, and perhaps it may be so. But it is certain that the most frightful tragedies sometimes take place in the seclusion of the harem. Rival favorites use every means to supplant each other, and wives, fearful of being divorced for a new caprice, employ poison and the dagger to remove a dangerous rival; and for each one of these tragedies that accidentally comes to light, how many remain forever unknown! The story of Aïsha as related in this book is one of the dark episodes of harem life unfortunately too frequent in Moslem lands.

I have endeavored to give an idiomatic translation

without destroying all the Oriental spirit of the original. I have also added a few explanatory notes.

I feel sure that the perusal of this book will give the reader a more complete idea of the Mussulman world than he could acquire by wading through volumes of mere descriptions. I therefore respectfully commend it to the favor of the public.

THE TRANSLATOR.

JUNE, 1883.



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A TRAGEDY AT CONSTANTINOPLE.

CHAPTER I.

A BAÏRAM PRESENT.

(Prologue.)

THE thunder of artillery salutes announced to the faithful the day of Courban Baïram, of the year of Hegira 1268 (A. D. 1851.)[1]

In the port of Constantinople the shipping was gay with the fluttering of thousands of flags, and the Ottoman banner proudly waved from the towers of Galata[2] and the Seraskierate (the War Department). But winter and rain, two unwelcome guests, had intruded upon the fête, the first with its frost, the latter with its pall of gray clouds.

Nevertheless, although the day was already far spent and the hour for the last prayer was approach-

1. The Baïram is the Mohammedan Easter. It lasts three days, commencing forty days after the fast of the Ramadan. — Courban in Arabic and Hebrew means a gift. — *Transl.*

2. A tower built by the Genoese in the Faubourg du Commerce.

ing, the streets of Stamboul[1] exhibited the utmost animation. The hamals (porters) bearing on their backs large, fat-tailed Anatolian sheep, jostled others carrying great hampers filled with fruit and covered with pink gauze after the Turkish fashion. Mollahs (Mohammedan priests), raising the skirts of their long robes, hastened along, carefully holding small boxes of loukoum and cheker (Turkish candies and bonbons), which are considered as obligatory Courban-Baïram presents.

All these bearers of gifts were heartily welcome. As soon as a door knocker was heard to strike—joyful cries arose from the house like a glad echo, and the present, quickly stripped of its gauze and ribbons, was gloated over by its happy recipient.

Every harem[2] had its female visitors, and every salamlik had its masculine callers. The women, clad in new antarés (long robes opened at the sides), showed each other the jewels given by their husbands, while the slaves in the antechamber expatiated upon their masters' generosity.

For the Turks, this is the gladdest day of the

1. Stamboul is the Turkish quarter of Constantinople.

2. Harem means the female portion of the household—and also the part of the house exclusively reserved to them; the salamlik is the part of the house reserved for the men, and is completely separated from the harem.

year.—So, putting away for the time their natural gravity, they are not ashamed to indulge in hearty laughter while drinking rakee,[1] smoking chibooks, and listening to each other's jokes.

In the lowliest konaks (Turkish houses) as in the proudest palaces, joy ruled supreme, thanks to the generosity of the pashas,[2] who on Baïram morning have numbers of sheep slaughtered in their court-yards, so as to supply a piece of meat to every indigent believer who applies for it.—On all sides was heard the expression, "Baïram boumbarek!" an equivalent to our Christmas salutations, interchanged by the passers in the streets.

On one of the heights of the quarter of Tophané[3] which rises above the arsenal, in an old wooden house, through whose fissures the December wind and rain found their way, an elderly couple were shivering. The large and lofty room with cracked walls contained no other furniture than a ragged red woollen divan and an old iron

1. A very strong distilled liquor much used in the East.

2. The title of Pasha is equivalent to Duke, and that of Bey, to Count. All generals are pashas, and all colonels and lt. colonels are beys; but these titles are bestowed on civilians also. Effendi is about equivalent to Mr.—or Esq., but is applied to persons of both sexes of a rank inferior to pashas and beys, and is frequently added to the latter titles by way of showing greater respect.

3. Turkish quarter opposite Stamboul, and separated from it by the port.

mangal half full of cold ashes.[1] The broken window panes gave ready entrance to the cold rain. An old white-bearded, green-turbaned Turk gazed sadly upon his empty pipe, while his wife whose face was deeply seamed by age and misery gathered over her breast the folds of her linen antaré, an insufficient protection against the inroads of the cold.

The old people were silent, and the waning day cast its dim lingering rays in the hovel.

"Fatma, Fatma!" exclaimed the old man suddenly clasping his wife's hands: "Who could have foretold that we should reach this depth of misery and destitution! This is the second day we have spent almost without fire and with no other nourishment than a small cup of coffee. Why did your pride hinder me from mingling with the beggars who crowded into Reshid-Pasha's court-yard? You would have had enough to eat for this evening at least. Do you forget, wife, that we are no longer young, and that we cannot stand such privations? If you knew how much I suffer to see you so pale and feeble. . . .!"

"Do not grieve for me, Osman," replied the

1. In the East, where dwelling-houses have no fire-places (as also in the Palace of the Vatican), the only warming apparatus used are large iron or brass basins called mangals, containing glowing coals. —*Transl.*

cadina,[1] "I would rather starve than see you beg. No, it shall not be said that Yusuf-Pasha's daughter has eaten the bread of charity, and that her husband has degraded himself by waiting at the door of a konak like a street-dog for a mouthful of meat."

"What madness is love!" sighed the old man. "We are suffering now for the follies of our youth. Oh, why did I ever know you! You were rich, and so beautiful and happy! You gave up everything to follow a wretch who had nothing to offer as a nuptial gift but the strength of his love. And now that I am old and unable to keep you from starving, I must atone by remorse for that irrevocable past!"

"What say you, Osman?" cried the old woman spiritedly; "do not curse the day which united us; for if fate had not crushed us, we would have been the happiest couple. It was written above! Would you blaspheme what Allah has decreed? He took away our children, He destroyed our fortune—and yet, this very night, let us bless His name. Listen, Osman—you hear the cannon which proclaims the close of this day; let us make our holy prayer, and though all have forgotten us, though not a human being has wished us a happy

1. Title by which elderly Turkish women are addressed.

Baïram; though the neighbors dared not face the rain to give us a salutation, nor the pasha's servants to bestow alms, let us yet in this horrible misery raise our hearts once more up to Allah! He alone is great, He alone can have mercy upon us. . . . !"

In her holy zeal the brave-hearted cadina arose from the sofa and, after the usual cold water ablutions, she wrapped her head in her veil and turning towards Mecca, knelt down in prayer.

Osman, who had heard many a time such words of consolation, very good for the soul but of little avail for the body, rose more slowly, and it was with less than his usual fervor that he repeated his numaz.[1]

When the old couple's prayer was over, daylight had gone; Fatma approached the mangal and tried to revive the ashes—but it was in vain that she looked for a spark; the fire had gone out with the daylight. Compelled to remain in darkness, the pair seated on the divan drew close together. Osman wrapped his pelisse over his wife's shoulders, while she pressed closer to him to warm her shivering frame.

An hour elapsed in this way. All the windows were ablaze in the konaks. The artillery-band

1. One of the five daily prayers offered by Mussulmans.

of Top-hané was plainly heard playing Turkish airs in front of the pasha's palace. The street noises were slowly dying away, for it was the hour when all gathered at home to enjoy the delicacies prepared by the skilful Turkish cooks and the harem slaves. Suddenly a loud knock was heard at the door of the hovel, startling the old couple from their torpor.

"Some one knocked, Osman," cried Fatma with a tone of unspeakable hope; "go quick and open the door."

The old man went groping toward the door—his fingers were so benumbed that it was not without difficulty that he raised the latch. To his great wonder he saw no one; he perceived only a shapeless object left on the door-sill. Fatma, who had followed her husband, asked in a whisper:

"What is it?"

"I don't know," said Osman—but bending forward, he perceived by the dim light cast by the neighboring windows a great baïram present—a real present wrapped with gauze, ribbons and flowers.

The old couple's astonishment was so great that they at first supposed the nocturnal visitor had mistaken the house. Who could send

such a bulky and handsome-looking present to them who had no friends among the rich, and only distant acquaintances among the poor? Their next idea was that it had been dropped by some thief who, being closely pursued, had thrown it at their door; but the street was deserted and dark and nothing justified such a supposition. Osman took the basket. To the silken cover was fastened a paper containing doubtless the name and address of the person for whom the present was intended. The old couple returned to their chamber and by means of some pieces of light-wood Fatma read the note in these words:

"A Happy Baïram to the good and honorable Fatma-Cadina. Each returning year will bring a similar present provided she takes good care of the precious object within contained, which is recommended to her good heart and vigilance."

The old people's curiosity reached its climax; Fatma, whose fingers were nimblest, quickly untied the ribbons and flowers and opened the silken wrapping. Each uttered a cry of wonder at the sight of a new-born babe, which on seeing the light of the pine knot, began wailing in such a way as to show that it was only a few hours old. Together with the child was a purse containing

one hundred Turkish pounds;[1] more than a whole year of comfortable support for the poor old couple so accustomed to privation and misfortune.

Having recovered from her surprise, Fatma's first impulse was to provide for the little waif which began to cry loudly for nourishment. She at once called in a young neighbor who had become a mother a few months before, while Osman, aided by that powerful talisman called money, went out to procure fire and lights for the house just now so cold and dark.

In less than an hour its appearance was completely changed, as if one of the powerful houris of the Mohammedan paradise had taken pleasure in transforming it. The mangal full of glowing charcoal distributed its beneficent warmth throughout the room now lighted up by a double chandelier. Seated on the sofa a young hanoum[2] suckled the new-born babe while listening with wonder to the narrative which Fatma-Hanoum characterized as miraculous. Three or four cadinas from the neighborhood, attracted probably less by the changed for-

1. The Turkish pound is a gold coin equal to $4.50 of our money. One hundred silver piastres=one pound.

2. Title given to Turkish ladies equivalent to Madam or Lady. Turkish titles are always placed after the first name: e. g. Ismaïl-Pasha-Ayoub—Ali-Bey-Mouktar; Nuzla-Hanoum.—*Transl.*

tunes of Fatma than by curiosity (a motive so strong with all the sex—and above all with Eastern women), were squatting around the mangal and fixed their dazzled eyes upon the baïram present carefully deposited in the centre of the apartment.

As for old Osman he pensively smoked his chibook in a small adjoining room and answered less readily than his wife the numberless questions asked by his neighbors. Yet the latter tried to efface by their attentions the neglect which had made the day so sad to the old Osmanlee.

A young boy clad in a bright-colored shirt and a scarlet fez blew the fire of another mangal for the benefit of the male visitors who could not be admitted to Fatma's chamber; another prepared a piece of mutton, while a third carefully sifted the rice intended for the pilaf.

Osman looked musingly upon the doings of his new friends so eager to aid him in his good fortune, so neglectful and indifferent in his poverty; but the old man at that moment was not pondering over such philosophical reflections. He was seventy and reckoned half a century of misery; that is to say he knew and appreciated as its just value the deceitful exterior of the human heart whose depths terrify us when we seek to sound

them. He had learned long ago to do without his fellow-creatures; he knew that the rich man's alms is given but once, and the poor man's not over twice.

After having held a high office in the arsenal, Osman Bey had been unjustly discharged by a pasha just assigned to command who needed places for his favorites. He was now ending his days after many tribulations, earning a few paras (farthings) paid him by the bathers to whom he brought coffee or the light for their cigarettes.

Osman, less elated than his wife by his sudden good fortune, was wondering over the mystery which enveloped the new-born babe more closely than even the silken wrappings. What delighted Fatma was the prospect of bringing up the little waif that had just brought joy and comfort to her household, but it clouded the old man's brow. He knew the world and dreaded with good reason this unexpected fortune. While the female neighbors were crowding to his wife's house to see this wonderful baïram present, Osman had gone out to procure some necessary supplies, and on returning to the narrow dark lane in which his dilapidated dwelling stood, he perceived one of those black Nubians called

Kiz-agassi (chief eunuchs) who are the custodians of the great harems.[1]

This one was mounted on a splendid and richly-caparisoned horse. A syce (groom and runner), wearing a long cloak which partially concealed his gold embroidered jacket, attended him on foot. The eunuch, tall and large, had the hideous countenance peculiar to the unfortunate instruments of Mussulman jealousy. His lips were thick and overhanging—his nose was broad and flat, his brow low, and he had an expression of cruel duplicity comparable to that of a tame tiger. The eunuch's presence in a quarter so poor and remote from any wealthy dwellings at once excited in Osman a suspicion of some connection between this Nubian and the foundling. He passed close to the eunuch, who was casting searching glances around, and he trembled on hearing him say angrily to the syce: "You have blundered, you giaour;[2] you have lost Achmed's trail, he never came into this filthy lane," and spurring his horse he disappeared leaving Osman half fainting with terror.

So then, the foundling's bearer was really being tracked—and worse still, tracked by a

1. Eunuchs are called Agas. A harem aga is always a Eunuch. Agas of Janizaries or other troops are not Eunuchs.—*Transl.*

2. Giaour, *i. e.*, heathen, infidel—the vilest epithet that can be applied to a Mussulman. — *Transl.*

eunuch of the imperial palace. Osman was certain of it for he had recognized the syce's livery. So he returned home very gloomy, dreading at each noise in the street to see the terrible black entering his door, claiming the child, and inflicting on him and his wife a punishment which they did not deserve. In his alarm, Osman entreated his guests to speak low, and carefully closed the worn-out curtains of his house for fear of attracting notice from the outside.

None but a native Osmanlee can understand the dangers incurred by the accomplices of a surreptitious birth or a concealed fault. If by chance the mystery is connected with the imperial harem, the punishment is all the more fearful for being delayed. Moreover, espionage is a very perfect system. It penetrates the harems under the guise of a venerable cadina or a candid young slave girl. The women talk freely before their visitors; they love dearly to tell not only their own secrets but those of their neighbors and friends also, and they like to appear well informed; for a Turkish woman ignorant of the occurrences taking place among the families of her circle is so vulgar! Thus, thanks to this feminine babble so treacherous through its very artlessness, the spy ascertains the secret opinions of the husbands, the brothers'

ambitious schemes, the fathers' complaints against the government. What Osman dreaded most was the incessant flow of talk in Fatma's chamber, for it was the most certain source of danger.

"Women will always ruin the world with their cursed babble!" growled the old man to himself, while his finger nervously crammed the moist tobacco into his long pipe.

"You are very gloomy to-night, Hadji Osman,"[1] said one of his neighbors who had observed his sullen air. "It would seem that the baïram saddens you more than the Ramadan fast."

"It is so long since I smoked a chibook that the smoke overcomes me, for I am no longer young."

A young visitor, having cut as many slices of bread as there were guests, arranged them upon a large waiter set on a bench by way of a table, and requested Osman to preside over the meal. All the neighbors sat down around the old man, who, taking a spoon dipped it first in the soup, saying: "Bouyouroom," (help yourselves) and his guests one after another followed his example.

A word of explanation is needed here for the reader who, unfamiliar with Oriental customs,

1. Hadji—pilgrim; a title given to Mussulmans who have made the pilgrimage to Mecca.

wonders perhaps at the freedom with which Osman's neighbors came to share his dinner when they had just finished their own. But they took their seats at his table only in obedience to the laws of Mussulman hospitality, which require visitors to share the meal served up in their presence were it only by taking one mouthful. A refusal of this token of good will is admissible only from an enemy, or a foreigner unacquainted with Eastern manners.

After sipping the bitter coffee which always marks the close of a Turkish meal, Osman's guests prepared to go. Young Kinia-Hanoum alone remained, having consented to wean her three months' child in order to nurse the little Aïsha; for this was the name that the cadina had at once bestowed on her adopted child. This name, venerated among the Turks (being that of the Prophet's favorite wife), was also that of a daughter whom she had lost. In spite of her fifty-five years, Fatma was strong and active, and the joy of having a child realized her dreams and cast a ray of happiness upon the close of her life; thus little Aïsha never felt the lack of affectionate caresses and vigilant care. This affection for a foundling was probably doubled by the impression made by an incident that had occurred six months be-

fore, and which must now be related to make this narrative clearer to the reader.

CHAPTER II.

THE HAMAM OF TOP-HANÉ.

THE favorite pastime of Mussulman women is going to the bath. Bath-day is expected impatiently as an excuse for relaxing the incessant supervision which mortifies them and makes them envy the freedom of European women. A harem prepares for the bath as for a feast. Early in the morning the slaves fold up the underclothes perfumed with rose water in covers of light-colored silk, one bundle for each bather. Neither do they forget the large chased brass or silver cup, which is used to pour water upon the head and body, nor the fruits and dainties, the dishes of rice, the jars of porous earth for cooling the water—and especially the tobacco; for cigarettes are the chief enjoyment of the fair triflers whose idle hours are as endless as those of the caged bird.

The preparations for the bath being complete, the young hanoums and the old cadinas put on

their handsomest féradjés (silk cloaks) and their prettiest dresses and repair in groups to the hamam (as the Turkish bath is called), attended of course by eunuchs, walking carelessly and without haste, loitering like children before every shop and wondering at everything which seems new or curious to them.

Among the numerous hamams of Constantinople twenty years ago, one of the most fashionable was that of Top-hané. Its pure and abundant water and the size of its pool gave it a vogue almost equal to that of Galata-Seraï in the European quarter called Pera. But the chief attraction of Top-hané was the pretended skill of its hamamjinas (female bath-attendants), who assert the power of straightening distorted limbs, of prescribing for sick and pregnant women, and who possess numberless remedies for all diseases of mind and body.

The faith of Eastern women in these female quacks is so strong that it is useless to try to convince them that these remedies are worse than the diseases. The hamamjinas are not only medical advisers, but they possess also secrets for beauty and against the evil eye. They sell the *henna* for dyeing the bathers' hair, eyebrows, and finger nails, the white paste contained in mussel-shells

for removing tan from the complexion, and the various cosmetics used by Turkish women. Thanks to these skilful washers, to whom the Turkish ladies confide all the ailings of body and mind, they hope to preserve their health and beauty—unconscious that they are injuring both.

The hamam of Top-hané is magnificent. The purity of its Arabic architecture pleases the eye of connoisseurs. It was constructed by order of Sultan Mahmoud's mother, and nothing was omitted that could contribute to its elegance and comfort. The entrance hall, paved with white marble, is adorned with a beautiful fountain in the centre. A gallery supported by triple columns surrounds it with graceful arcades, under which the bathers undress.

One morning in the month of Djemal el awal,[1] just six months before the Courban-Baïram, this hamam exhibited an animated scene. A number of half-naked women were romping around the fountain; others rocked their children in improvised hammocks suspended between two columns; some young Greek girls hung their European dresses against the walls, while Turkish slaves

1. It is impossible to give an equivalent for the months of the Mussulman calendar, for their year is eleven days shorter than ours, and thus the month which corresponds this year to January will sixteen years hence correspond to July.—*Transl.*

spread out carpets and cushions for their mistresses.

Fatma Cadina was among the attendant washers at Top-hané; but being the poorest and proudest of them it often happened that she was called last and generally by hanoums of inferior rank.

Eight o'clock by Turkish reckoning (eight hours after sunrise) had just struck by the hamam clock, and Fatma despaired of having a call that day. Her only support being the bathers' fees, she sighed to herself as she saw the other attendants hastening with busy step through the hall. One had just bled in the foot a fat Armenian lady who suffered from headache. Another was applying cupping-glasses on the back of a healthy-looking hanoum.

At this moment the tapestry door of the hamam was pushed aside and a negress came in followed by a young woman. The plainness of her black silk féradjé, and still more the presence of one single slave, seemed to indicate the wife of an effendi of middle rank—for Turkish women take a pride in being attended by a numerous train. After speaking to the mistress of the bath, she moved towards one of the galleries; but all the places being taken, Fatma, who had risen on her approach

in the hope of a small fee, told her that if she went up on the first story she would find the galleries empty. The young hanoum agreed willingly; she seemed anxious to avoid the curiosity excited by the entrance of each new bather. Fatma went before the two women, spread a carpet on the straw mats, and helped the hanoum to remove her veil and féradjé.

"Do you want an attendant, hanoum effendi?" asked the cadina in an anxious tone, for she feared that the negress had been brought for that purpose.

"I want not only an attendant, but some drugs also," answered the hanoum blushing.

Fatma wondered what drugs could be needed by this young, beautiful, and healthy-looking creature who now undressing revealed an alabaster shape, a fit model for the greatest sculptors.

Having wrapped herself in a great white linen sheet with red stripes, she leaned upon Fatma's arm leaving the negress in charge of her clothing. As the hanoum was about to start down the steps, the black slave kissed her hand in the Oriental manner and whispered some words in Arabic, on hearing which the young woman bent her head affirmatively, and Fatma felt the tremor of the hand which was resting on her arm.

Fatma felt a sudden sympathy for the young hanoum. With the intuition peculiar to suffering souls, she divined the sad thoughts under that smooth brow, perceived a tear in those downcast eyes, and understood that a painful and secret emotion stirred that lovely bosom.

The cadina made her young customer cross the white marble hall which adjoins the bath-room and is lighted from above by great glass lenses inserted in the cupola; this antechamber is intermediate between the vestibule and the bath-room. The bathers, half stifled by the hot steam of the bath-room, come there to get a cooler breath and lie down upon the tepid marble flags. Others, like veterans accustomed to stand fire, order their lunch and squat down around the dishes of halva[1] and dolma,[2] while the hamamjinas hang around to catch some stray mouthfuls.

This intermediate hall is appropriated for the *kief*—a Turkish word which expresses the beatitude of a human being indolently stretched out, smoking a cigarette, sipping frozen lemonade, while drowsiness hovers over his eyelids without closing them and procures the bliss of temporary oblivion.

1. Cakes made of flour and sugar.

2. Rice and hashed meat rolled up and cooked in vine leaves—one of the best dishes of Turkish cuisine.—*Transl.*

The Top-hané bath-room is a very large octagonal hall entirely paved and walled with white marble. Lofty cupolas let in the light through large glass lenses which soften without intercepting it. Twelve marble fountains are sculptured in the wall, and brass spouts let flow at will hot and cold water into marble bath tubs supported on pedestals. Four doors opening into smaller chambers, each adorned with two fountains, are used by hanoums who paying an additional fee wish to be more secluded. It was into one of these that Fatma led the young hanoum who had signified a desire to be alone.

While the cadina, having fastened a large sheet over the door-way by way of portiére, was washing the marble flags and filling the bath, the young woman seated on one of the marble steps of the fountain remained lost in thought, her hands folded upon her breast and her head drooping mournfully.

"Allah! why so sad?" asked Fatma with that Oriental familiarity which permits the most indiscreet questions to be asked without a rebuff. "Did ever one see such wondrous beauty, such blooming youth embitter the happiness granted it by Heaven?"

"Why speak of happiness?" murmured the

hanoum. "To me, life is as dark as if the branches of the Sedjin tree covered it with their fatal shadow.[1] I feel as if I were groping under it, and all my life will be too brief to escape it."

"Hapless child!" cried the cadina with an impulse of deep compassion: "Must I relate my worst woes to let you see that yours can be as nothing in comparison?"

"I doubt it," replied the hanoum, "but relate them all the same. I pity all who suffer, for grief finds a continued echo in my heart."

Fatma, who always found great relief in pouring out her sorrows, profited by the time spent in washing the bather's long hair and omitted none of the calamities she had undergone.

"Truly, Zavallah!" (God help you), "you have suffered so much!" cried the young woman when the cadina had concluded her narrative. "You are a noble lady and to-day you are waiting upon a slave—for I am nothing but a slave. Allah! what toys we are in thy almighty hand when it pleases thee to cast our destinies to the storm of chance, like a handful of sand swept away by the simoon!"

Speaking these words, the hanoum arose. Af-

1. A tree of the Mohammedan hell. A horseman at full speed could not get out of its shadow in ten thousand years.

ter wrapping her hair with a plushy towel bordered with gold, she covered herself with a sheet and passed into the antechamber to rest. Her negress brought her some refreshments and tobacco which she graciously shared with Fatma.

The poor cadina was touched by the girl's kindness and, without asking her directly in what noble konak she was a slave, tried to find out where she lived—but the latter turned off the conversation so skilfully that Fatma lost her trouble. As it was growing late, the young hanoum returned to the bath-room to finish her bath.

As soon as she was alone in the room with Fatma, she clasped both her hands and putting her lips close to the cadina's ears, said blushing:

"You have the reputation of being very skilful in preparing draughts—I must beg you to let me have one. . . . "

She dared not proceed, but Fatma understood her at once, for she replied:

"I will tell you frankly that it is dangerous to thwart nature, and I am perhaps the only one in this hamam who condemns the Turkish womens' fatal custom of avoiding maternity."

On hearing these words, the young woman covered her face with her hands in confusion.

"Oh dear child," said the cadina tenderly, "do not think I blame you in the least; I guessed quickly from your sadness and hesitation that you do not follow your inclination, but obey a will superior to your own."

"That is true," said the young woman, "but it *must* be so, you hear, cadina. Hasten to prepare the fatal draught, for who knows whether I shall find courage to take it later?" And speaking thus, she burst into tears.

"What mean these tears?" asked Fatma; "excuse my indiscretion—it is sympathy alone which. . . ."

"I see, I feel it," interrupted the girl, "you are very good to me; I thank you. It is long since I wrapped myself up in my sorrow without daring to confide it to my companions, without being able to impart to a friendly ear the secret of my grief, but now my heart is too full and it overflows.—Listen to me then, Fatma Cadina, and know first of all that I have trespassed upon the rights of my august mistress—here the girl quickly corrected herself—I mean the hanoum, who brought me up and to whom I owe everything—a fatal destiny has caused it all. The Pasha is away just now and cannot protect me from the wrath of my mistress, who has discovered

my fault and wishes to efface its consequences before her husband's return."

"Has your hanoum no children?"

"No, and it redoubles her wrath."

The cadina thought for a moment.

"Ah!" continued the slave, "I have sought every means to escape this extremity which seems a sacrilege. A fault cannot be effaced by a crime. Alas for us, hapless daughters of Circassia! We are abandoned as soon as won. Our beauty fades away with our first child, and the only joy left us is that of maternity. Just think of it, hanoum! I have never known my parents and I feel within me the promise of a child! I cannot express the joy I feel through all my wretchedness. You understand me, don't you? for I see your eyes full of tears. Thanks for your pity, but advise me. See how wretched I am and give me courage, for mine has vanished."

The young woman exhausted by her emotion fell in Fatma's arms; the latter kissed her brow and said in a tender, almost solemn tone:

"I desire to know nothing more, neither who is your mistress, nor what is your pasha's name; but I declare to you that my hand will never prepare a draught which my conscience forbids. *Have patience* and courage; Allah is great and

merciful; your pasha may return and you may escape your hanoum's watchfulness, especially if she believes that you have obeyed her orders. As for me, I dwell in the quarter of Top-hané, in the oldest house in the alley of Chibookjis" (pipe-makers). "Humble as is my roof it will be always ready to shelter you, and you may be sure from this day of having a place in my heart."

"Thanks, thanks!" joyously cried the young woman fondly kissing the cadina's hands, "I will remember your kind offer and will follow your advice. Allah bless you for not having spurned the confidence of the unfortunate Ikbal!"

And the young slave continued warmly to thank her old friend who lavished tender consolation and wise advice upon her.

When about to leave the hamam, the negress requested Fatma to give the package containing their clothes to the eunuch Achmed and to tell him to call Ikbal-Hanoum's carriage.

The cadina hastened to put on her old worn-out féradjé and left the hamam; a few steps off in the street was an elegant equipage—a groom was walking up and down, talking with the coachman, both clad in very plain liveries: but Fatma knew too much of the mysterious ways of great palaces not to guess that this was a disguise. In fact her

suspicions were promptly verified; for she recognized the imperial crescent on the horses' harness.

This discovery terrified her. Ikbal a slave of the Seraglio![1] But when she turned towards the slave and caught her glad and grateful look, she closed her eyes to the abyss into which her bold advice might hurl the young woman, and warmly pressing the little hand which slipped a Turkish pound into her own, she repeated once more: "Be of good cheer!"

Ikbal entered the carriage whose blinds were half pulled down by the negress, and with a parting gesture to her old friend, she was whirled away by the spirited team.

That night, the cadina did not fail to tell Osman what had happened to her; but they both vainly exhausted all their ingenuity trying to guess what august princess might be Ikbal's mistress; their curiosity remained unsatisfied. Then days, weeks, and months passed on, and by degrees Fatma forgot this adventure; winter followed summer with its frost adding to the old couple's trials until the day that the unexpected Baïram present, the eunuch's words, and the name, Achmed, the same as that of Ikbal's aga,

1. *A name applied exclusively to the Sultan's harems.*

convinced Fatma that the slave's desires had been fulfilled, and that she had succeeded in baffling her mistress's cruel will.

When the old couple became satisfied that little Aïsha could be none other than Ikbal's daughter, prudence commanded them to leave the quarter of Top-hané where they might be discovered any day, and to seek concealment in some village of the Upper Bosphorus on the Black Sea. After much cogitation Fatma selected Beïcos on the Asiatic side. It was a village inhabited by the humbler class of Mussulmans and contained only two or three rich konaks. There, unknown to all, Osman and Fatma might secretly bring up their adopted daughter until the day her mother could claim her. The cadina's certainty of Ikbal's maternity was confirmed by the discovery of a ring set with an uncut ruby sewed to the babe's tucker, a ring she had noticed on the girl's finger.

To turn away all suspicion and to efface all their tracks in case of pursuit, Osman gave out that he was going to settle at Stamboul, in the quarter of Chézadé-Bashi; the young nurse alone was informed of the truth.

But once well concealed at Beïcos in a small house of cheerful rose color, lost on the hill among many other similar dwellings, Fatma thought of

sending Ikbal her new address. This was no easy thing, for it was necessary first to know where she lived.

Osman, always unselfish and ready to help his wife when a good action was to be done, went lounging in the neighborhood of the imperial palace. He hoped to again meet the eunuch or the syce whom he had seen on Baïram night, and through them to get a clew to the young girl without exciting suspicion about her. The old man put on a dress of Egyptian blue cloth; loose trousers gathered at the waist by a party-colored sash, and a jacket braided with black gimp. He bought one of the portable glass boxes filled with Turkish candies and loukoums, which always find purchasers at the konaks' gates, and in the disguise of a chekerjí, or candy seller, set out towards Dolma-Batché, the magnificent though scarcely-completed palace which Sultan Abdul-Mejid preferred to all others.

Around the exterior palace gates which open upon the road from Beshiktak to Ortakeuy, numerous servants and eunuchs were always lounging and soon became Osman's regular customers. But, after a few days the pretended merchant was satisfied that the Nubian whom he sought did not belong to his Majesty's harem. With the pretext

that a eunuch owed him thirty paras' worth of chekers, he described the one he sought and passed them all in review. But all eunuchs are alike, and to describe one is to describe all; the same affected elegance contrasting with a deformed body and a repulsive face, the same splendid horses richly caparisoned with gold and silver-fringed housings; the same richly-dressed syce. Osman sometimes feared being unable to recognize the Nubian whom he had seen for only one moment in the dark alley, but that face or rather its terrible look had so impressed the old man, that he would have known it even if the satanic expression had given place to the loutish and stupid laughter which greeted his appearance in the Seraglio's outer court-yard.

Three weeks had been spent in useless search, and each time Osman came home in a caïk (name of the Bosphorus boats) facing the winter's blasts and a rough sea, Fatma begged him to give up the task. But Osman wished to accomplish it to the end; so, he paid no heed to his wife's prudent remonstrances and continued his search, no longer towards Dolma-Batché, but about all the principal palaces belonging to the Sultan's family. Perseverance is seldom baffled, and Osman's was rewarded at last.

One evening in the month of Sapher, the pretended chekerjí returned full of joy to Beïcos. He threw aside his candy box into the corner of the room and said to his wife:

"This piece of furniture is of no further use. Now it is your turn, Fatma, to penetrate into the harem which I have at last discovered."

"I will do it," said she; "a pretext is easily found. Tell me quick, who is Ikbal's hanoum?"

"Her Highness Alieh-Sultana, the aunt of our august sovereign, and Mehemet Pasha's wife."

"Good Heavens!" cried Fatma, who heard these words with secret terror, "that is the name I dreaded, for when still young, this high-born sister of Mahmoud-Sultan was already notorious for her cruelty. Allah grant that she may have changed in growing old! But no matter, I will go to her palace, and though I should die for it, I will get to Ikbal!"

"Insh-Allah!" (Please God), said the old man calmly while lighting his chibouk.

CHAPTER III.

THE "MENU" OF A PRINCELY BREAKFAST.

THE palace of Salih-Bazar is admirably situated on the sea-shore, exactly facing the entrance of the port of Constantinople. One of its fronts look upon the road leading from Top-hané to the palace of Dolma-Batché; another faces the sea of Marmora, and snow-covered Olympus looms in the distance like the spectre of the dead gods of paganism. On the right rises the Old Seraglio, with the cupolas of its mosks and the needles of its minarets mingled with tall cypresses; on the left, the double shores of Europe and Asia enclose the Bosphorus as far as the Black Sea; and in the centre of this gorgeous frame so marvellously sculptured by nature, so richly gilded by the sun, crowds of barks, caïks, and white-winged vessels glide swiftly over the blue water. What a picture for a poetic soul! Blessed must be the women who dwell behind the grated windows which command a view without its equal in the world!

Although not a cormorant, that privileged

Bosphorus bird which makes its nest over the sculptured windows of the palace and on the capitals of its columns, the reader may penetrate into the very chamber of Her Highness Alieh-Sultana, the august mistress of Salih-Bazar. One afternoon in the month of Sapher (corresponding in that year to February), she was seated lost in thought, her idle fingers toying with the amber beads of her chaplet.[1] A few slaves leaning with folded arms against the door-posts or squatting upon the Smyrna carpet dared not interrupt the silence of their haughty mistress.

The winter's cold was hardly felt in this large room hung with Broussa silk and heated by a beautifully-chased brass mangal, in the shape of a vase set on a pedestal, containing glowing coals whence arose the vapor of odorous pastilles. Outside, the wind moaned and shook the palace windows, unable however to penetrate the folds of the heavy silken curtains. Only its sullen voice reached the warmly-clad young women, and increased by contrast the luxury and comfort of the hall lighted up by eight-branched chandeliers.

Nevertheless the Sultana listened to every blast

1. The Mussulmans, male and female, habitually carry strings of amber beads, not for the purpose of counting their prayers--but to occupy their fingers as they sit idle or walk about.—*Transl.*

that blew—to each wave that clashed against the steps of her palace. The clock striking a late hour awoke her from her reverie, and she ordered her slaves to retire.

One of them, a young and beautiful Circassian with slender form and lovely face, asked if Her Highness desired her help to undress.

"I don't wish it, Ikbal," she said sharply without even turning her head. "I want no one, and wish to await alone the Pasha's return."

Ikbal bowed meekly without replying and went out with her companions, leaving the Sultana, her brow resting upon her hand, her eyes listlessly fixed upon the arabesque ornaments of the hall.

As Fatma had said, the Sultana was no longer young, and she never could have been handsome. But, with increasing age, thanks to the enamel which covered her face, her black eyes seemed larger and deeper, her carmined mouth exhibited thin and haughty lips. Her black hair was coquettishly wrapped with an embroidered gauze scarf fastened with diamond pins. A pink satin pelisse lined with fur covered her almost entirely, barely showing her silken antaré and the lower part of her loose Turkish trousers. This elaborate toilet showed a desire to please—all the stronger be-

cause the Sultana had reached the latter days of the autumn of her life.

Hardly had the slaves disappeared behind the heavy Persian tapestry portière, when another door opened and Her Highness's favorite eunuch stealthily entered the room; he walked so lightly that the sound of his footsteps, deadened by the thick carpet, did not rouse the princess until he stood in front of her.

"Ah! 'tis you, Ali!" she exclaimed with a joyful look which made the Nubian smile. "Well, what news?"

"The pasha told the truth, Highness, he has gone to dine with the grand vizier."

"Well. . . . that's all?" asked the Sultana fixing her eyes intently upon Ali.

"According to Your Highness's orders I have sought information about *what you wished to know*," Ali said with marked emphasis; "but my search has lasted two months and I think it is useless to continue it. . . ."

"Then you are certain that I was mistaken?"

"On the contrary, I am almost sure you were right; but our adversaries I mean those of Your Highness, are too faithful to give any information unless you have sufficient courage to seek it from the proper person."

"What do you mean, Ali? Have I ever shown a lack of courage when there was any question of avenging my offended honor?"

"I don't mean that, Princess. You have misunderstood me."

Then familiarly approaching the Sultana, he added in a low tone: "You will never learn anything from Ikbal; both harshness and kindness have been lost upon her, as you well know. It is from Mehemet-Pasha alone that you can know the truth."

"From the pasha! Can you think so?"

Ali smiled grimly, and his dark eyes flashed.

"I don't mean when the pasha is himself, whispered the eunuch; he is too much attached to Ikbal and would reveal nothing, but on a night like this for example, when he is returning from a jovial dinner, His Excellency is somewhat mellow. If Your Highness would only be less haughty you might coax him out of a kingdom."

Alieh-Sultana raised her head, and the same expression of hatred and duplicity gleamed upon the faces of the two accomplices.

"You are an intelligent fellow, Ali. I thank you and will follow your advice. Go to the harem; see that none of those girls disturb me, and order His Excellency's chief aga to tell his master to

come at once to my apartments, at whatever time he may return."

Ali, whom the reader has no doubt recognized as the eunuch vainly sought by Osman, backed out of the room with lowly obeisance to Her Highness, whose depression had given place to a smile of satisfaction.

Alieh-Sultana did not have to wait long. An hour before midnight His Excellency's carriage was heard in the court-yard. A few minutes later the door through which Ali had gone out was opened by Mehemet-Pasha. He looked ill at ease on entering, but was reassured by his wife's kindly glance. She found him in the condition she desired.

In fact, Mehemet-Pasha found it difficult to steady himself upon his legs which tottered under his corpulent stomach. His face was flushed and his eyes had the maudlin expression produced by intoxication.

"Sit down here, pasha-effendi," said the Sultana, making room for him on the divan; but he, still somewhat uncertain, remained standing and stammered:

"Your Highness summoned me. . . . My aga was notified that no matter what hour I returned, I was to come to you. . . I feared you were ill. . ."

"Why then, dear Mehemet," replied the Sultana, gently drawing the pasha down on the sofa which groaned under his weight, "is there nothing but illness that can procure me the pleasure of your visit? May I not ask the favor of seeing you without frightening you? Have I become hateful to you?"

Then, seeing that the pasha looked puzzled and perspired copiously in the effort to understand his wife's meaning, she continued caressingly drawing nearer to her husband:

"I have not treated you well, Mehemet. I have been sulking at you for six months and my conscience reproaches me; I have accused you who are so good, so loving; and as I did not want my slaves to witness my repentance, I sent for you to-night to say to you: Mehemet do you forgive my tyranny, do you still love me?"

Alieh-Sultana had clasped both the pasha's hands, who touched and bewildered stammered out:

"I, forgive you, Highness? Why, it is I who need forgiveness!"

"You confess, then, that you have done wrong also? I love you all the more for it. Then I am less guilty than I thought, is it not so? Tell me so, my Mehemet, for you see I am in tears."

The Sultana was wiping away fictitious tears, and the pasha, in his tipsy condition, felt deeply touched by such marks of repentance from so proud and unyielding a woman.

"Calm yourself, dear Highness," murmured Mehemet, making great efforts to speak distinctly; "you are almost at my feet when I ought to be at yours. — Your jealousy was just. Don't cry so. Your anger was justified. Come Alieh, rise and forgive me, for I alone am guilty and you are an angel of goodness."

Alieh stifled a cry of rage which Mehemet mistook for a sob of contrition. She raised her burning brow, laid her husband's hand on it, and said faintly:

"Speak to me so always, my effendi — you do my heart so much good. I forgive everything, I forgive you and her, provided you hide nothing from me," she added, giving her hands to the pasha, who kissed them with sincere emotion.

"Why should I conceal anything?" said he.— "Must I confess it? Your haughtiness alone turned me from the right path, and I would long ago have forgotten that adventure if the unfortunate girl's condition had not deserved some regard."

The Sultana could not repress a start, but she

leaned more graciously yet upon Mehemet, whom this speech had exhausted.

"And this pretended Baïram present, where did you send it? Why not have trusted me with the poor little creature. I would have brought it up with care. . . . I who am childless?"

"What! you would have condescended?. . . . Who told you?. . . ."

"I know all, Mehemet, and it is for this reason that I forgive you. You feared my wrath, you helped Ikbal to put the babe in a baïram basket and you sent it towards Top-hané?"

The pasha, still struggling against an overwhelming drowsiness, nodded his head affirmatively.

"Well then, afterwards, Achmed entrusted it to whom? Try and remember, my Mehemet," urged the Sultana, seeing that the pasha vainly struggled against the drowsiness which was closing his eyes.

"I remember nothing more. . . . I swear it—except that the old woman was called. . . ."

The pasha murmured a name she could not understand, and his head dropped down upon his breast The Sultana drew back and watched him a few minutes; when his loud, regular breathing proved him to be fast asleep, she ran quickly into

the other room where Ali awaited her like a fatal spectre or an evil genius.

"You were right," cried the Sultana, pale and agitated, sinking upon a sofa, while Ali cautiously closed the doors to prevent his mistress's being surprised in this condition. Her wrath, too long suppressed, dilated her nostrils, her hands shook and her lips were convulsively compressed.

"Wallah! How agitated Your Highness is! Did the pasha dare to be insolent to his Sultana?"

"He insolent! you are crazy, stupid Nubian. The pasha is asleep, he is drunk, but he confessed everything. Ikbal has trifled with me; she did *not* take the draught when I sent her to the bath at Top-hané. She has dared to brave my anger, but she shall have little time to enjoy her success!"

Then, with an appalling burst of laughter: "She has a child, the wretch, and I. . . . I can have none!"

"Well! does Your Highness know the whereabouts of that child?"

"You were not mistaken Ali; Achmed took it away with the other baïram presents sent by the pasha. It would seem that Allah protects that treacherous slave; it was during the fêtes which kept me at the imperial palace that Ikbal was con-

fined, and they sent the child to the house of a woman of Top-hané."

"We will find that woman, and Your Highness shall be avenged," said Ali hoarsely.

"Ah yes, vengeance! I will have a terrible revenge! We Sultanas have the right of tolerating no rivals.[1] Our husbands when widowers, cannot marry again; and a man elevated by my love would dare to love a slave! By Allah who denied me a son," cried the Sultana, pointing a threatening hand towards the chamber in which the pasha was sleeping, "I will be avenged on yours, Mehemet!"

* * * * *

When the pasha awoke it was broad daylight. The night wind had lulled; the ground was covered with snow, and the cupolas of the mosks and palaces looked like white marble. Sea and

1. This of course is a privilege limited to the Princesses of the imperial family. According to law and custom a Mussulman may divorce a wife at any time by simply uttering two words: "Thou divorced." She has no remedy and she cannot divorce her husband nor force him to divorce her. According to Mohammedan law, all the slaves of the harem belong absolutely and unreservedly to the master—and he can make them his titular wives if he chooses. A slave who bears a son is usually made a wife—a former wife being divorced for the purpose if necessary in order not to exceed the *legal* number of four. But *all* the children born in the harem, whether of slaves or of wives, are equally legitimate under the Mussulman law and have equal rights of inheritance. According to the Koran, which is a complete code of laws

sky wore a uniform grey tint; the first somewhat rough, the latter swept by heavy clouds which lowered on the hill-tops.

A number of caïks bringing visitors had stopped at the palace of Salih Bazar, awaiting His Excellency's waking to present a petition for a place, or to ask the re-instatement of some relative who had incurred Sultan Abdul-Mejid's displeasure; for the latter already ailing, troubled himself but little with the administration of his empire; and Mehemet-Pasha being among the number of favorites having a seat in the Grand Divan or Council, derived therefrom immense influence. He was no longer young, being fifty-five; his health was undermined by an almost continual gout; and the immoderate use of rakee had destroyed the manly beauty which had formerly captivated the affections of one of Sultan Mahmoud's sisters.

Mehemet went down to his salamlik about five o'clock *alla Turca* (five hours after sunrise), which would be quite late for a European minister; but

civil and political as well as religious, Ikbal had committed no wrong whatever, moral or social, in yielding to her master's will. The present Khedive of Egypt is the son of a slave afterwards elevated to the rank of wife for having given birth to Ismail Pasha's eldest son Tewfik; the only rights a woman possesses under the Mussulman law are in her property, which remains hers always during marriage or after divorce.—*Transl.*

Time seems to have no wings for the Osmanlees and the well known *bacaloum*[1], which is their usual reply to everything, is only an indefinite putting off of business. Consequently the pasha's callers, well knowing that their visit would not bring about a prompt settlement of their affairs, waited with phlegmatic patience, drinking every fifteen minutes a small cup of bitter coffee and smoking incessantly while talking politics. These Asiatic minds, educated in unlimited faith in God and Fatalism, acknowledge no absolute right except might, which they consider as Fate. This idea is so innate that they do not select a career, but submit to it. A man (they say) should be fit to act every part in life; learning is a good thing, but why kindle in our minds that intellectual flame if a contrary fate is to annihilate it?

With such principles, no wonder that common street peddlers are sometimes appointed ministers of war or of the navy, while skilful sailors are sent to the interior of Asia to inspect cavalry regiments, and good generals to take charge of medical schools?

Neither high birth nor exceptional talent can shield a Turk from a disfavor, which sometimes

1. "We will see"—equivalent to the Arabic boukra—to-morrow, used by Egyptian officials.—*Transl.*

continues a lifetime. A moment's chance suffices to make a man's fortune or destroy it. A pasha greatly courted to-day because of his high position, is never certain of possessing it to-morrow. Hence this fatal custom of *backsheesh* (bribe or gratuity) which has ruined the government by making it accept the most onerous undertakings, because the backsheesh paid to the minister was proportional to the fabulous amounts which the empire had to pay in the end. In Turkey, power is for most ministers an opportunity of getting rich at the government expense, and it is an inevitable evil, explained by the frailty of their tenure.

But with what equanimity a Turk accepts his fall! When a Vizier has been removed by the Sultan's whim, his colleagues and all their employés fall with him. It is a general rout. Now the successor comes in with a numerous train of friends and followers to provide for. The duty of the late vizier is to do homage to his successor; but the visit is made without constraint; the compliments are expressed without bitterness; the ousted party is not discouraged—six months, a year at most will bring about a change. The new vizier will be allowed just time enough to perfect some measures which will win for him the Sultan's

favor and the hostility of the European ambassadors, or *vice versa*. Then, as it requires a genius to maintain the balance of politics in a country where opinions are so varied, a day will come when his hand will be too feeble to uphold this heavy burden, and that is the time impatiently expected by his adversaries.

No sooner is a minister's fall made public, than his konak, just now so full of friends and petitioners, is suddenly deserted; the gates once wide open are closed hereafter; and the ex-potentate is very lucky if not sent to rule over some remote villayet (province), a banishment imposed upon those who are no longer in favor at court. The interior of the empire is therefore governed by malcontents. Is it any wonder that they show so little zeal and impose such unjust exactions upon the unfortunate peasantry? To entrust a country's progress to malcontents is to stop everything. — The true wealth and hopes of Turkey are entirely in the villayets, and to misgovern the provinces is to bring starvation and ruin to Constantinople, that capital which devours the substance of the whole country without giving it in return impartial justice and a regular administration.

But this is digressing about a question which no one has yet been able to solve. Let us return

to Mehemet-Pasha, whose position as husband to a Sultana secured him more than any one else against ministerial changes.

After having comfortably settled down in the easiest arm-chair in his office and ordered a small table with his inkstand and reed-pens to be set before him, Mehemet-Pasha commanded his chief valet to bring him the portfolio in which his secretary had classified yesterday all the papers which His Excellency had to read and approve. This reading lasted an hour, and as soon as he had done with the last paper the pasha with a sigh of relief threw the portfolio on the carpet, lighted a cigarette, took a turn around the room to brighten himself up, and sat down again folding up one leg under him; after having learned the names of the callers waiting in the antechambers, he began his audiences. That is to say the aga ushered in at first three pashas who, having no business, settled down each with his chibook around their friend Mehemet. Now commenced one by one the procession of petitioners who, seated on the edge of their chairs ten steps from His Excellency, their eyes cast down, their robes buttoned up to the chin, and their hands clasped breast high, humbly recited their requests like school-boys before their master—this deportment

being obligatory upon all Turks or rayas[1] who present themselves before a superior. The pasha, his vest open and his fez pushed back on his head, smiled blandly upon them, occasionally interrupting them to ask one of the pashas the price of his chibook, or his tailor's address, and dismissed the petitioners with an evasive reply.

At seven o'clock (Turkish), that is about noon, Mehemet had just dismissed his last visitor when a eunuch entering through the harem door told him in a whisper that an old cadina wished to speak to him for a moment.

"Let her wait in the harem; I am going to say my prayer and I will see her afterwards; and at the same time bring in breakfast. Wallah! I am hungry as a wolf, and I shall not wait for an old woman," he added with a guffaw.

The eunuch reported this reply to the visitor, whom under her green silk féradjé and her thick yashmak,[2] the reader will recognize as Fatma. She had arrived ten minutes before in a four-oared caïk.

Having knocked at the harem door, which opened before her, she asked a eunuch if she could see Alieh-Sultana.

1. Non-Mussulman subjects of the Ottoman Porte.

2. A long narrow veil covering the entire face except the eyes, which all Mussulman women must wear when outside the harem.

"Her Highness has been absent since early this morning," was the reply.

"May I see some of her women?"

"All the women went with Her Highness."

"Every one?"

"Every one."

Fatma was somewhat disconcerted; this sudden departure seemed a bad omen, for it was not the season for excursions and the cold weather offered no inducement to outdoor recreation. But what seemed still more strange to the cadina was the Sultana's taking *all* her slave women with her, for it is customary always to leave some in the harem.

"If you have anything important to tell Her Highness, venerable cadina," said the eunuch who had given her this information, "I would advise you to return in a few days, unless you prefer to speak to His Excellency Mehemet-Pasha, who is in the salamlik."

Fatma reflected a moment; the Sultana being absent, was not this the best opportunity to see the pasha and ask his protection for little Aïsha? Would he not have a better chance than the cadina herself to inform Ikbal secretly of the care taken of her child, and the watchfulness used to hide it from the Sultana's rage?

Fatma being a woman who acted promptly when she had made up her mind, said to the Nubian:

"My son, be kind enough to tell His Excellency that I wish to speak to him."

"With pleasure, hanoum, follow me."

After taking Fatma through several unoccupied but richly-furnished rooms, he ushered her into an apartment called His Excellency's library, from which a door opened into the salamlik.

This room, on the ground floor, looked out upon the court-yard which separated the palace from the Cabatash road. Light and delicately-carved wooden gratings adorned its windows, preventing outsiders from seeing the interior but not obstructing the view from the inside.

Judging from his library, Mehemet should have been a learned man, for it contained the best French, English, and Italian authors—but the fact is he did not know a single word of the three languages used by Dante, Shakespeare, and Corneille.

Turkish customs dispensing with all marks of courtesy from men towards women, Mehemet barely noticed Fatma on entering, merely pointing to a seat, while she made a profound salutation (called the temineh), which is performed by bring-

ing the right hand close to the ground, as if to scoop up the dust trodden by the august personage addressed; then lifting it to the heart, the lips, and the brow. This salute is repeated two or three times before uttering a word. Mehemet returned Fatma's three salutes by merely raising his hand to his fez.[1]

"What do you want, hanoum effendi?" he asked without looking at her, which is the Mussulman mode of showing respect to women of the same faith.

"I want first to tell you who I am, Excellency, for my name is perhaps not unknown to you. I am Fatma, the daughter of Yusuf-Pasha-Missirli" (the Egyptian—from Misr-Egypt), "and the wife of Osman-Bey-Alepli," (*i.e.*, from Aleppo).

At these words Mehemet raised his head uneasily and turned a questioning look upon the cadina.

"Does your Excellency want further explanations? I was living in the quarter of Top-hané last Baïram, when I received. . . ."

1. The distinctive Mussulman head-gear of red felt with black silk tassel, shaped like an ordinary tumbler and *never* removed except on going to bed, when it is replaced by a white cotton cap. It is worn by all, from the Sultan to the donkey driver, and is considered as a sign of their religion. In Turkey and Egypt, it is called *tarboush*. The lower classes and the old-fashioned Mussulmans wrap several yards of muslin around it making a turban of it.—*Transl.*

The pasha sharply interrupted his visitor.

"In Allah's name, not one word more on this subject, hanoum! Remember, we are here in the harem, where your presence may create suspicion;"—and approaching Fatma, he added in a whisper: "What an imprudent thing you have done in coming to Salih-Bazar when you know the Sultana lives here; you endanger Ikbal's safety—perhaps her life. . . ."

"Fear nothing, Pasha-effendi; my friendship will never compromise Ikbal's safety. I had invented an excellent pretext to get to her without awaking the Sultana's suspicions—but it is useless, since Her Highness is absent with all her women."

"The princess absent! What do you mean? I saw her only this morning, and she said nothing of such a purpose."

"Ask your eunuchs, Excellency. Indeed I fear that this forebodes some misfortune."

The pasha jumped up from his seat in a tremor, and his impatience was such that he ran after his servants instead of summoning them to him. He was told what the reader already knows—that the Sultana had driven out, taking all her women with her. Mehemet was afraid to ask if Ikbal was among the number; but where had the Sultana gone? To the imperial palace was the reply.

Mehemèt was intensely alarmed at this news. Alieh-Sultana had sought protection in the Seraglio.—She must have some cause for dreading her husband's wrath.

When the pasha returned to the library he was so pale that Fatma asked him in alarm what had happened.

"The Sultana has gone to the Seraglio. I fear last night's gentleness was only an artifice to draw from me the information she desired. . . ."

"What do you mean?" cried Fatma. "Did you reveal Aïsha's birth and her place of concealment?"

"I fear!" stammered Mehemet sinking down on the divan.

"What! for your child's sake, explain; what did you tell her last night, Your Excellency?"

"I deserve reproach—but intoxication is my excuse. The Sultana questioned me when I came back from the Grand Vizier's dinner, where we had quaffed numerous flasks of Cyprus wine. She was kind and caressing as in the first days of our marriage. I was deceived by her gentleness, confessed my fault and I think I uttered your name without suspecting the snare perhaps prepared for me."

"What imprudence!" replied Fatma. "I have

no faith in the Sultana's generosity, and I repeat it, this unexpected departure is an evil omen."

"I agree with you," said Mehemet gloomily—"and what alarms me is that she took Ikbal with her. Is it a mark of favor or a new calamity for the poor girl? Indeed, for the sake of prudence, hanoum, I advise you to leave Stamboul until the day Ikbal can join her child."

"Allah grant this may be soon!"

"I will protect her with all my power; until then rely upon me. Your wants and the child's shall be amply supplied. By the way—what name did you give her."

"I thought it well to call her Aïsha, but if Your Excellency wishes to give her another name. . . ."

"Oh no! It is a matter of perfect indifference to me. I will remember Aïsha and all your kindness to her, you may depend on it, hanoum."

As the pasha uttered these words a servant came to let him know that his breakfast was ready. Fatma rose unwillingly, for she had more to tell Mehemet and desired more definite directions as to her leaving the city—but she dared not remain for she saw that he wished to close the interview, so she added:

"We are now at Beïcos, Pasha-effendi, and the

mollah of the mosk of Unkiar-Skelessi will show your aga the house where we live. You may rest assured, Excellency, that your orders will be obeyed with all possible zeal so soon as you will please indicate the town you think most secure from the Sultana's pursuit."

"I think Armenia is best, being away from lines of travel; a village near Erzeroum, for instance."

"Just as you please, Excellency; to us, all the land of the believers is beloved and blessed soil."

Then making a profound salutation to Mehemet, she backed out of his presence, letting fall behind her the heavy Persian tapestry.

The pasha immediately repaired to the dining-room, where the servants brought a huge circular silver waiter on which were silver-gilt dishes; all supplied with similar covers, indispensable in the East to keep the contents warm on the way from the harem-kitchen to the salamlik.

The pasha sat down cross-legged on a divan, and an aga brought him a chased silver basin and ewer and poured water upon his hands, while another followed with a gold embroidered napkin. Then drawing up a low ebony table, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, they set upon it the waiter loaded with the abundant repast.

An Osmanlee in high position seldom eats alone, visitors being always numerous in the konaks—and visitor means invited guest. In Turkey it is understood, perhaps better than anywhere else, that a hospitable board makes a cheerful feast, and consequently procures good digestion. Whoever eats while laughing and talking, transforms into a joyous pastime that portion of our lives devoted to consuming food.

Turkish meals, even in the most unpretentious konaks, are composed of a multitude of dishes, all of which, containing but little, satisfy the appetite by slow degrees, and offer a continual variety of taste and form.

The best means of acquainting the reader with the menu of a Turkish meal is to describe that of Mehemet-Pasha, who had the reputation of being an accomplished gourmand and who kept the best and highest-priced cooks.

On this particular day, by some chance independent of Mehemet's will, he was alone at breakfast before this huge waiter crowded with more than twenty dishes, which his servants uncovered one after another.

First came a whole roasted lamb stuffed with rice, raisins, and pistachio nuts; next a dish of small fish delicately fried in batter; then egg-

plant fried in oil; boiled squashes stuffed with hashed meat; the national dish called dolma, consisting of hashed mutton and rice wrapped and cooked in vine leaves; which together with chicken breasts stewed in rose water, cakes of fine flour and sugar, called *halva*, and *catahif*, or dough cooked in syrup, are highly esteemed in Turkey; then came fruit-jellies, jessamine sherbet, and rose preserves, which Eastern ladies are so skilful in preparing; and finally a number of side dishes in small saucers. Last of all, the pilaf, a dish of rice seasoned with butter and tomato juice which, in accordance with the traditional Mussulman custom, is invariably served in every house and at every meal.

In wealthy palaces, when Europeans are among the guests, plates, knives, and silver spoons and forks are arranged *alla franca;* but generally the Turks consider this a wearisome refinement, and their women dislike it. The habit of eating with the fingers is so ingrained, that generations will pass before changing it. Except a few pashas, who have long resided in Europe, the other dignitaries, like Mehemet-Pasha for instance, think that forks are superfluous since nature has provided us with them. The principal fault of Turkish dinners is the entire absence of liquids.

No pitchers, no bottles on the table; a large glass of water is alone brought to each guest at the end of the meal. The Orientals never drink while eating, and wine is excluded by the Prophet's holy law. It is only in their secret suppers that bottles of Cyprus, marsala, and sherry are quaffed with the gusto forbidden fruit always bestows.

Mehemet's appetite, checked for a moment by Fatma's visit and the news of the Sultana's departure, promptly revived at the sight of the various dishes which gave out such delicious fumes; he began with the side dishes and the servants stood back, leaving only a single dish still covered—the largest which towered above all the rest.

Mehemet had already trifled with all the fruits and tasted of all the dishes, when the eunuch Ali entered the dining-room. The Nubian's eyes wore an expression of fierce triumph, and his mouth expanded into a grin exhibiting teeth as sharp and white as a jackal's.

"Good appetite, Your Excellency!" said he, saluting his master less respectfully than was seemly, and in such a mocking tone that Mehemet started and cast a bewildered glance at Ali.

Certainly the latter's countenance could only confirm the pasha's doubts as to the Sultana's generosity. Ali was the passive instrument of

that powerful and restless will, weary of life yet dreading to lose it, but readily sacrificing that of others to her caprices. It was Alieh Sultana who had originated the idea of making her slaves walk barefooted in summer upon the marble flags which they had to wash every morning, and in winter upon the straw mats which at once froze and excoriated their feet. How these poor women dreaded Ali! It was he who, ready to punish them upon the Sultana's least sign, added all his malignity to his mistress's cruelty. The eunuch's heavy hand let fall the lash upon the shoulders of the young girls whom he abhorred because he was incapacitated for loving them. In fact, eunuchs, by a freak of nature, are prone to jealousy and watch like dogs in the manger to prevent any profane glance from reaching the women entrusted to their guardianship. The pasha felt sure of Ali's watching his harem with vigilant care, and therefore he sometimes overlooked his ill-temper.

Nevertheless, for a year past, that is since the day Mehemet had shown favor to Ikbal, the handsomest slave in the harem, a covert hatred had arisen between the pasha and the Nubian. Formerly Ikbal had found favor in the eunuch's eyes, and he even treated her with an affectionate kind-

ness quite foreign to his cruel nature. Every morning he brought her the finest rose in the garden to adorn her veil, and Ikbal took it laughingly, while the Sultana condescended to smile, telling Ali: "I will give you Ikbal for a wife when I no longer need her services," and Ali joyously rubbed his hands at the idea, while the young girl ran off telling him it would be a long time before that fine dream was realized. In the meantime Ikbal's condition was suspected, and it was then that the eunuch's smothered rage became apparent. Unable to take revenge upon his master, he plied the lash upon the unfortunate girl, who succeeded however by dint of patience and cunning in concealing her condition and eluding her august mistress's anger until the day when, with the help of Providence and Achmed, she was enabled to entrust her babe to Fatma's hands.

Ali, still more bitter in his hate than the Sultana, had not been duped by Ikbal's artifice. He set out in pursuit of Achmed, but the reader already knows that he was baffled. Since that time Ali was always morose; Mehemet Pasha was therefore alarmed at the eunuch's smile. In such a revengeful heart, joy could arise only from satiated hate, and on seeing the Nubian enter the

salamlik uncalled, the pasha involuntarily glanced at his agas to make sure that they were at the door.

"Your Highness wonders at seeing me?" said Ali, as if he had read the pasha's thought in his eyes.

"Not at all," replied Mehemet, wishing to conceal his anxiety; "in fact I expected you sooner."

"Why so?" asked the eunuch abashed by this cool and unexpected reply.

"Was it not your duty to tell me the motive which induced my wife to leave Salih-Bazar so suddenly?"

"Her Imperial Highness Alieh-Sultana," said Ali with emphasis, as if to reprove the want of respect with which Mehemet had mentioned the princess; "Her Highness, having been summoned to the imperial harem by her august mother, did not think fit to inform Your Excellency; and I, her humble servant, cannot reveal what my august mistress wished to hide."

"So you know the motive of the Sultana's absence?"

"Yes, Excellency."

"And you will not tell me?"

"I regret that I cannot."

Mehemet quivered with rage.

"Does this dog of a Nubian dare show disrespect to me?" he cried raising his voice so as to be heard by his servants. "Wallah! this can't be tolerated. I will compel you to speak, you black beast!"

Ali heard this storm of words with a stoicism which implied that he did not care for their import.

"Well, will you answer, you brute? What brought you here? What do you want?"

"I came only to wish Your Excellency a good appetite," said Ali coolly with a wicked leer, his nostrils expanding still more.

"If that's all you came for you had better be off; your villanous face takes away my appetite."

"I perceive that Your Excellency is not doing justice to this delicious repast; perhaps it is because you have not yet seen the exquisite dish prepared for you by your noble lady's special care."

And Ali extended his arm towards the dish that still remained covered, while Mehemet's eyes followed his every gesture.

"This new dish will explain the Sultana's absence much better than I can."

Lifting the heavy cover he flung it far away. Mehemet uttered a frightful shriek which summoned all his agas, but like their master they stood frozen with amazement at the horrible sight which met their eyes.

On a deep silver dish, half full of fresh rosy blood, lay a young woman's head. Her half-closed eyes and the placid expression of her face showed that death had surprised her before effacing the smile from her lips. Her beautiful brown plaited hair was coiled like a triple diadem upon the severed head, enhancing by contrast with its dark hue the marble pallor of her cheeks.

"Help! Murder!" cried Mehemet as soon as he recovered his speech. But the terrified agas stood riveted in their places, helpless to aid their master, who was gasping and writhing on the divan.

Ali, who had coolly witnessed this thunderclap of his own production, left the salamlik without a word, only making a sign to the eunuchs to approach their master.

Achmed, the first aga, rushed towards him and helped him to rise and leave the fatal hall, without Mehemet's having courage to turn and look once more upon his favorite's severed head. But when he was in the saloon and found himself alone with

Achmed who supported him, he began to sob like a woman, murmuring:

"Poor Ikbal, poor Ikbal! I have been unable to protect thee. . . . Allah grant at least that I may save our child!"

END OF THE PROLOGUE.

CHAPTER IV.

SIXTEEN YEARS LATER.

SIXTEEN years had passed. Many political events had taken place during that time. Sultan Abdul-Mejid had been dead six years, and the accession of his brother Abdul-Aziz to the imperial throne (1861) realized all the hopes of the faithful Mussulman subjects, who had seen with grief the empire governed by the feeble hand of a sickly, indolent, and worn-out monarch.

Until the day that he became Sultan, Abdul-Aziz had lived far from the court, having nothing to do with public affairs except to deplore their course. He led the life of an agriculturist in the environs of Beïcos, where he had established what the Turks call a tchiflick *i.e.*, a farm or plantation. The neighboring peasantry unanimously praised his affability, his patriarchal manners, and his simple ways so different from the Sultan's pomp. His quiet life was a striking contrast to Abdul-Mejid's court.

While the imperial harem was crowded with

women collected from all the cities of Asia to please the fancy of the worn-out Sultan, Aziz, young and vigorous, had chosen a Circassian wife who had no known rivals. While Abdul-Mejid hardly deigned to go down once a month to the cabinet council, where he regularly slept through the whole session, Aziz made active efforts to improve his country's agriculture, so neglected in Turkey, and which should be its chief resource, because of the fertility of the soil and the advantages of the climate. He had imported a skilful farmer from Switzerland, and many pairs of the best breeds of cattle in order to cross them with the degenerate Asiatic stock. The prince's tchiflick soon became a model farm, and the surrounding lands were improved by his care. Praises were showered upon him from every quarter, sympathy soon became affection, and when Abdul-Aziz ascended the throne he was hailed with unanimous acclamation throughout the empire. He had numerous friends, multitudes of young and zealous partisans, and the support of the young and intelligent generation which understood that Turkey needed great reforms and a wise and enlightened government.

The first years of Abdul-Aziz's reign did not disappoint the hopes which had been entertained.

It was he who inaugurated the ministerial sessions that took place at night at the Seraskierate, and which he always honored with his presence. Huge beacon lights illumined the top of the tower until two or three o'clock in the morning, announcing to the Turkish people that their Sultan was working at the affairs of State, a thing without a precedent in the annals of Islamism. It is customary for the Sultana-Validé (queen mother) to present a new wife each year to her august son, a few days before the fast of the Ramadan. Abdul-Aziz abolished this custom, and afterwards it was to his wife that a young female slave was annually presented. Free schools arose by the side of each mosk and education, which is essentially religious in the East, was confided to mollahs. In every village and district free schools were established for the Greeks, Jews, and Armenians, and received large subsidies from the government. Instruction was made obligatory upon all. Benevolent works, hospitals, mutual-aid societies, found a generous protector in Abdul-Aziz. To help in his task of renovation he selected two intelligent and zealous ministers who were types of political genius, acknowledged as such by Europe itself. They were A'ali-Pasha and Fuad-Pasha. The ancient Turkish costumes, so inconvenient and

unsuited to the active life of business men in our age, were remodelled as much as possible in the European style. The Turkish women alone retained their féradjés and yashmaks (face veils), but the former was modernized into a species of cloak like a chamber wrapper, and the latter became lighter and more transparent. The sultanas gladly exchanged the heavy thick muslin for white silk gauze, which like a slight mask embellished the face without concealing it. The carriages, equipments, and furniture of the Seraglio and the ministers were made in European fashion. The heavy Turkish ornaments and the primitive fabrics of the country were superseded by European textures and good taste. This tendency to copy Europe, which was the desire and dream of the young Turkish generation, reached its apogee when it was known that the Sultan was about to leave Constantinople to travel in Egypt, and some years later in the chief capitals of Europe. This time, Turkey believed herself at the climax of civilization. What! The Sultan renounced the old customs which forbade the Chief of the Believers to leave the country he governs! He was going to see with his own eyes that old Europe, the intelligent guide of the world, the industrious hive whence issued all the marvels of

science and art! Fuad-Pasha, a well-chosen guide, was to accompany His Majesty. A skilful politician and a man of mind, he was highly esteemed by all the courts with which he had intercourse as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Moreover, Abdul-Aziz took with him his young nephews, the sons of Abdul-Mejid and heirs to the crown. The people saw in this another proof of their sovereign's sagacity. Usually the young princes were imprisoned in the harem, away from court intrigues, ignorant of State affairs, educated a thousand leagues from the kingdom they were some day to govern. Was it not a mark of generous disinterestedness to initiate the princes in European politics and customs? General applause hailed the Sultan's departure for Paris; a numerous retinue, composed entirely of young men most distinguished for birth and talent, escorted Abdul-Aziz as far as the Dardanelles.

The government of the empire, wisely entrusted to A'ali-Pasha, had however to quell many disturbances, and to punish many culprits; for in the midst of the joyful acclamations which had hailed the new Sultan, and especially the civilizing reforms, there were found enemies and opponents. They were not numerous, it is true, and were chiefly old fanatical mollahs and former employés

of Abdul-Mejid.—Two bitterly hostile parties then arose in the empire and still exist, for time alone may perhaps harmonize them. They are the reformers usually called "New-Turkey," who are most numerous and belong to the new generation; and the conservatives or "Ancient Turkey." It would seem at the first glance that the reformers ought always to have the advantage over their adversaries, and they would if the other party were not supported by the women, and in Turkey as in all other countries in the world, women wield a power all the stronger because it is unseen and it is impossible to meet its attacks. It would be a huge mistake to suppose the harem is free from political influences.

When it was decided in the grand council of ministers that the Sultan was to set out for Europe, some mollahs in high positions tendered their resignations as a mark of disapproval. Abdul-Aziz accepted the resignations and the religious party at once assumed that they were insulted in the persons of their prelates. While all the young mollahs and all the softas (students of Mussulman theology) greeted the Sultan's journey as an act of profound diplomacy, the old mollahs rebelled and endeavored to stop his departure by suggesting to the Sultana-Validé that her son's

salvation and her own might be irrevocably lost by this caprice of New-Turkey.—But the Sultan in spite of the deep affection he had for his mother would not yield. Only he promised not to remain absent more than a month, and he faithfully kept his word.

On the 24th of July, 1867 (1284 of the Hegira) a telegram from Varna informed A'ali-Pasha that the Sultan would arrive the next morning in his magnificent yacht "the Sultanieh." At this news the inhabitants of the Bosphorus hastened to prepare illuminations for the night, and to proceed on board caïks and steamers to meet their sovereign at the mouth of the Black Sea. The Sultana-Validé, the Sultana-Aziziet, wife of Abdul-Aziz, accompanied by all their slaves and the princesses of the imperial family, went on board the yacht *Pertew-Pialé* to receive His Majesty and bid him welcome.

His arrival was greeted by the bright and fervid July sun and the salvos of one hundred guns from the forts Roumelia Cavak and Anatolia Cavak. At Buyuk-deré and Therapia, villages on the European shore inhabited by the principal ambassadors, the sailors of the Russian, English, French, and Italian men of war manned the yards and shouted their hurrahs, which were responded

to by the cries of *Yasha Padisha* from the Turkish soldiers garrisoned at Beïcos on the Asiatic shore facing Therapia; and these salutes, repeated like echoes on each side of the Bosphorus, were continued up to Constantinople. What a triumphal entry! and what pride and emotion the Sultan must have felt at these demonstrations which proved how much his subjects loved him and hoped in him!

The splendid yacht *Sultanieh*, after having stopped to take on board the Sultanas from the *Pertew-Pialé*, resumed her course slowly and majestically, followed by more than twenty steamers in whose wake the Bosphorus became billowy as the sea.

After having accompanied the Sultanas to his cabin, the Sultan returned to the deck where A'ali-Pasha awaited him. They were both eager to meet, the former to learn state news, the latter to observe the changes which the sight of European courts might have wrought in his sovereign's ideas.

"I hope Your Majesty has been pleased with your journey," said A'ali-Pasha after the Sultan had first addressed him, for etiquette forbids speaking to the Sultan without permission.

"Much pleased, but I thank Allah for not

being blinded like the kings of Europe, whose religion is so false and so different from ours."

"May I ask Your Majesty what struck you most in European manners, and what you most admired in the cities you have visited?"

"The cities of Europe are well built," replied Abdul-Aziz, "but they are not endowed by nature and situation like Constantinople. It is evident that business and money-making alone occupy their population. The women shamelessly exhibit their necks and shoulders at the balls, and let themselves be carried off on the arms of other men under the very eyes of their indifferent husbands. The most gracious smile is on their lips, the most bewitching expression in their eyes, and their partners encircle their flexible waists with a calmness which proves that passion has been so much suppressed by education that it is almost unknown to them."

"Your Majesty is right. Civilization's morals seem loose to the rigid followers of Mohammedanism; yet these very women are good mothers and faithful wives, industrious and educated; vanity alone makes them smile and desire to look beautiful. An education entirely different from that which we give our women is the cause of their conversing with men as innocently as with

their own sex. Perhaps the innate desire of pleasing makes them shine more in a society where they mingle freely with the other sex, but their souls are not polluted by it."

"Do you believe in the civilization of a country where, as in London, poverty kills off thousands each winter? Have you ever seen the statistics of the overflowing prisons and penitentiaries of those industrious countries?"

"Because in Europe *all* crimes are punished, Your Majesty; Justice reaches the smallest vagabond as well as the greatest criminal. In Turkey justice is imperfect; the culprit is unpunished and allowed to escape."

"He will not escape the judgment of God!"

"So Your Majesty, I perceive, is not enthusiastic about your journey."

"I am very glad I made it, but I confess I was in haste to return to Turkey. That active life, in which each hour has its task and a king is kept at work like a school-boy, could not please me; he is the people's slave, while on the contrary, the people should be ours."

"Sire, Sire! if any one should hear you!" murmured A'ali, glancing uneasily around.

"And what if any one did! am I not here at home, and must I conceal my feelings? The Eu-

ropean nations are frivolous; they are occupied with arts, industry, commerce, politics, science, etc., and they neglect the most important matter—their salvation!"

A'ali-Pasha sighed; the statesman had hoped that his master would have had ability to appreciate the advantages of active, civilizing life; he had noticed only its weak points.

"Nevertheless there are great geniuses among them," he replied: "Your Majesty must have admired the magnificent museums, the wonderful inventions, the united efforts of all those men striving for the same end, their country's greatness."

"I acknowledge," answered Abdul-Aziz, "that what struck me most is the ugliness of the chief European princesses, except Empress Eugenie and Empress Elizabeth. When a king takes a wife, should she not be the fairest? But no; he selects a princess; no matter about her beauty so she is a king's daughter. It is absolutely ridiculous!"

A'ali-Pasha glanced at Fuad-Pasha who was conversing animatedly with young prince Mourad, Abdul-Mejid's eldest son, and heir apparent to the crown.

Abdul-Aziz took up a field-glass which he

turned towards the palace of Emirghian, belonging to the Viceroy of Egypt.

"His Highness has a magnificent European garden," said he sarcastically; "he seems to be imitating us."

"Your Majesty is mistaken; he does not imitate us; he imitates Europe. To imitate us would be policy; with him it is a conviction."

"You mean he has an innate taste for everything that is in vogue among Christians."

"Your Majesty will not deny Ismaïl's great intellect."

"Well, I acknowledge his intellect, but that is all he has."

"And it is all that is needed," thought A'ali.

"Do you know that on my journey to Egypt I noticed that Ismaïl's regiments were better equipped than my own?"

"The uniform does not make the soldier, Sire; he is moulded by his chief. An army is formidable only when led by able generals."

"To-morrow you must come to the salamlik, my dear Vizier, and you will see the plans I have devised for our country's future."

"Allah bless and enlighten Your Majesty!" said A'ali joyfully.

"Bring Fuad also."

"That is my dearest wish."

One of the Sultana-Validé's eunuchs came to inform His Majesty that his august mother desired to speak to him. The Sultan rose at once, putting off until the morrow any further inquiries about state affairs.

This indifference about public interests was painful to the grand-vizier who foresaw an approaching insurrection in Crete and desired to act promptly.

When A'ali Pasha was left alone on deck Fuad came up to him and said abruptly:

"Well, what about Crete?"

"That is a question I would like to have heard asked by the Sultan!" said A'ali.

"The Sultan," replied Fuad whispering in the vizier's ear: "You mean the Sultanas. Woe to Turkey the day we fall!"

"You think then that Abdul-Aziz is in the category of the old Sultans?"

"Exactly."

"You heard his ideas about Europe?"

"More than that, he said to me: 'I am more civilized than the French, the English, and the Prussians, whom I have visited. I have no need of learning anything from them; only one thing pleased me in France—the empress; one thing in

England — the fleet. As to Austria and Prussia, I envy them nothing. But as sure as I am a Sultan, I swear that I will find a young woman who resembles Eugenie, and I will have built in England some iron-clads better than theirs!'"

"And this is all the Sultan has brought back from his journey?"

"I am afraid so; but I begin to believe that another star will shortly rise on the horizon which will rivet New-Turkey's eyes."

"And who is this star?"

Fuad turned towards the stern of the steamer, where the other members of Abdul-Aziz's retinue were gathered, and without affectation, as if he was merely pointing out the "sweet waters" of Asia now just abreast of the *Sultanieh*:

"Observe among those young men the one whose simple manners and timid smile makes men forget that he is destined to rule over them some day."

"Mourad-Effendi?" whispered A'ali.

"The very one; it is he, I predict, who will some day be the cause of Abdul-Aziz's fall."

"You mean his death; a Sultan leaves the throne only for the grave."

"Customs change with years!" suddenly said a gay resonant voice on deck, which startled the

two ministers, for this exclamation unconsciously uttered the reply A'ali was about to make. The newcomer who had spoken it gracefully saluted A'ali Pasha, and then with a smile held out his hand. "European fashion, illustrious pasha effendi! Let me at least bring back a fragment of civilized manners."

He who came so familiarly to shake hands with the grand-vizier, though Turkish etiquette admitted only a profound salutation, was one of the Sultan's chaplains. He is to-day at the summit of the spiritual hierarchy; nevertheless we venture to outline his portrait on this humble canvas which contains the most important characters of the Turkish revolution. His Highness Haïri-Oullah has never disguised for one moment his progressive sentiments. We may therefore inscribe his name in full in this book.

In 1867 Haïri-Oullah,[1] or as he was then styled Haïri-Effendi, was about forty to forty-two years old, though he hardly seemed thirty-five. He was tall and slender; his face was a handsome Syrian type, whose regular features were softened by a frank and cheerful expression. He wore with dignity the mollah's white turban, which admirably became his lofty intellectual brow. Spark-

1. Oullah equivalent to High-Priest.

ling black eyes contrasted with his white and delicate complexion and the bright gold of his beard, which he wore full but close-clipped. Haïri-Effendi was the son of a venerable mollah in charge of the imperial mosk of Dolma-Batché. Being endowed with a quick and intelligent mind, he had been one of Abdul-Aziz's warmest supporters and was in the front rank of the reformers. He had probably many enemies among the conservative clergy, but he cared little for that. As with Fuad and A'ali, his country's good was paramount with him.

"Here is our charming mollah!" cried A'ali cordially. "You are welcome; and pray tell us the meaning of the enigma you propounded at random as you came on deck."

"I am not sufficiently lavish of wit as to scatter it at random," replied Haïri; "what I said was the prelude to what I did in shaking hands with you."

"Do you attach so much importance to it?" said the sceptical Fuad.

"Yes, for it is a reform. By shaking hands with you I wiped out thirty years of Turkish habits.—Is not this European salutation the pledge of the harmony which must hereafter exist between Turkey and her European allies? I

thus wish to prove to you that I recognize the concord which must prevail between them for their common security and prosperity; therefore, as I said before customs change with years."

"Unfortunately it is not customs alone," said Fuad.

"You are never satisfied."

"Men of your age are always satisfied; men of mine, never."

"Experience must be paid for."

"Yes, but the mischief of it is that the silver with which it is bought is too easily seen."

While saying this, Fuad-Pasha pointed to the white threads which marked his hair and beard.

"One as rich in intellect as Your Excellency should attach no importance to these attacks of time," said Haïri.

"Well, I have made up my mind to them; if in society I speak to a young woman, she listens politely and even smiles at what I say; but her eyes seek in the crowd a younger admirer than I. I have no longer a claim to captivate the heart; for the heart is captivated through the eyes, and with all my eloquence I can only win attention."

The pashas' conversation was interrupted by the Sultan, who came up on deck, followed by several aides-de-camp. The latter stood aside,

while His Majesty leaned against the bridge railing near Capt. K—— Pasha, who had just given orders to stop, for the steamer had reached the palace of Dolma-Batché.

The great imperial caïk, followed by those of the court, came up to the *Sultanieh*. At the same time the batteries of Top-hané and Scutari thundered out their salutes.

No one who has never been to Constantinople can form an idea of those wonderful boats called caïks.[1] Oh that my pen were a pencil! that I might show my readers their graceful and delicate forms like a sea-shell, and the light oars which barely grazing the water propel them more rapidly than any other boats.

The Sultan's great state-caïk is a masterpiece of construction and splendor. It is spotless white with a border of pink and gold; twelve pair of oars propel it. The caïkdjis are dressed in white silk shirts, loose white trousers, and scarlet fez. On the stern is a light crimson velvet canopy enriched with gold resting upon four gilded columns; under this canopy is a velvet sofa for His Majesty and in front of it two small benches for his aides-de-camp. The tiller is held by an Arab in scarlet and gold. At the stern is a great gilded bird

1. Pronounced Kah-eeks.

with outspread wings. This description gives a a faint idea of the luxurious bark which harmonizes so well with the blue sea that reflects the golden fringes. The caïks of the retinue, equally rich but without canopies, follow in its wake, and the charmed eyes of the beholder are fascinated by their rapid and fairy-like evolutions.

His Majesty Abdul-Aziz had hardly ascended the steps of his palace of Dolma-Batché when he was received in the great hall by all the functionaries who had been unable to meet him aboard his yacht. Conspicuous among them the Sheik ul Islam, clad in a long white mantle and a white turban adorned with a gold band, lifted up his hands to bless the monarch's arrival. All the other ulemas, wearing green or violet mantles, were formed in two ranks from the main gate of the palace to the first saloon of the salamlik.

CHAPTER V.

THE HEROES OF THE FUTURE.

WHILE Abdul-Aziz is receiving the compliments and good wishes of his clergy, we will

ask the reader to follow two horsemen galloping at full speed along the road to Orta-Keuy.[1] The first is twenty-two, a handsome dark young man with fine moustache and expressive eyes. His name is Salaheddin-Bey; he is an aide-de-camp of the Sultan and the son of a general on the retired list. The second, a mere youth, is a Circassian named Hassan, without any relatives except a young sister whom the Sultana-Validé is educating in the imperial harem. Hassan accompanies his friend Salaheddin to catch a glimpse also of the family life so precious to all hearts.

Salaheddin's father's house was situated on one of the hills of the village of Orta-Keuy, between a beautiful terrace commanding a view of the landscape and a garden full of fruits and vegetables. This was the time for peaches and apricots; the trees were loaded with them. The two travellers breathed the perfume of the roses and jessamines which bordered the road they were following. Salaheddin dashed into the yard of the konak with the joyful assurance of a child certain of his welcome and threw his horse's bridle to a servant, hastily asking about his father's health,

1. Keuy as the French write it — Koï on the English maps — pronounced Koo-ee, is the Turkish for town or village and is the termination of many names of places — like *ton* in English geographical names.—*Transl.*

while Hassan alighted more slowly and followed his friend into the salamlik.

The old general Hamid-Pasha pressed his son to his heart while the latter kissed his hand, then after having replied to all his questions about his journey, Salaheddin left Hassan with his father and repaired to the harem to embrace his mother.

Nimeta-Hanoum was a jolly fat woman not the least fanatical, and engrossed with her household to a degree which a European lady might emulate. In fact, a very false idea prevails as to the idleness and carelessness of Turkish women. In reality nearly all hanoums are excellent managers, distributing the day's task to each slave and keeping their konaks with minute care and cleanliness. Mussulman women having no other amusement than their households, in which they spend three-fourths of their lives, take pleasure in arranging and adorning them.

On that day, Nimeta-Hanoum and her slaves were occupied in picking roses for preserves; a task requiring much care and attention, but it did not occupy all her thoughts, for from time to time she sent a little slave to the Salamlik to ask if Salaheddin had arrived.

Salaheddin was the only son of General Hamid

and Nimeta; and their whole affection was concentrated upon this handsome young man of whom they were justly proud. Educated in one of the best colleges of Vienna, he had cultivated the solid learning of the Germans, and afterwards spent four years at the military school of St. Cyr in France, where he acquired that elegance of manners and sprightliness of mind so seldom combined with German education. He loved his country like a good patriot; he was desirous of serving it with all the strength of his intellect and willing to shed all his blood for it. He practised his religion without fanaticism, yet with the respect inspired in the bosom of an honorable family for traditions regarded with sacred veneration. Salaheddin belonged to that race of proud and energetic men of whom heroes are made and who are unfortunately too scarce in our times. Accurate judgment and great evenness of temper enabled him to distinguish the true duty of a Mussulman in the 19th century from that of the middle-ages. Being the ardent disciple of the reformers he had accepted the post of aide-de-camp to Abdul-Aziz during his journey to France, not with the desire of shining before the ladies of the court but rather to study upon the Sultan's countenance the varied impressions Europe would produce upon

him, and to hear the new sentiments which should arise from them.

When Salaheddin entered the harem and was clasped to his mother's heart, all the slaves hastened towards him to kiss the skirt of his coat and to wish him a happy return. More than one among these girls had doubtless counted day after day of the young bey's absence, and perhaps their hearts beat quicker because of his sudden arrival. But the young man did not even glance at them, and hardly thanked them for their kind wishes; he seated himself upon the divan near his mother and entered upon one of those conversations so sweet to the heart of one who has longed for the return of a beloved traveller.

Two hours had flown by and he had not finished telling his mother all that she was anxious to know, when a slave came from his father to remind him that Hassan-Bey was his guest, and some important business compelling the pasha to go out, he requested his son to come to the salamlik and entertain his friend. Salaheddin arose not without regret, and rejoined Hassan whom he found drumming upon the window-panes, not knowing what to do to conceal his weariness.

"Forgive my want of courtesy," said Salaheddin shaking hands with the Circassian; "but when

a son has been away from his mother for a month which seemed an age, he must give her at least an hour on his return."

"Do not complain of it. You are indeed happy to possess a beloved family," said Hassan bitterly. "Alas! I who am an orphan feel keenly that I am unwelcome wherever I go."

"How can you say such a thing? You know that your friends love and respect you; and friends are said to be relatives by selection."

"If I had then only to select a brother I would choose you at once," replied Hassan quickly.

"I regret not having a sister in order to realize your words, but I am an only child as you know," said Salaheddin smiling.

"As for me, I have an idolized sister with whom I made the journey from Circassia five years ago when we were taken to Constantinople like a caravan of wild beasts. But fate having decreed that the Sultana-Validé should buy her for the imperial harem I am deprived of seeing her as often as I wish, and it is only when a portion of the imperial harem goes to the country and my sister Mihri is in the party that I can have the luck of paying her a visit."

"Well," said Salaheddin, "I heard the chief

of Her Highness's eunuchs say that most of the girls of her household had gone sea-bathing at the Beylerbey palace which is just opposite us."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Hassan with an expression of sincere joy; "oh if I were certain of it!...."

"It is very easy to find out; let us take a caïk and go to Beylerbey. You will ask the eunuch on duty if your sister is at the palace; if she is not, we will have at least a charming sail of fifteen or twenty minutes."

"How kind you are! I accept gladly."

"It is only right after selfishly indulging in family joys and neglecting my guest that I should offer him some compensation in his turn."

The young men took a caïk and crossed the Bosphorus. In ten minutes they landed in Asia at the village of Beylerbey, where the Sultan had built a charming palace on the water. The two friends went to the Seraglio gate Their aide-de-camp's uniforms produced the usual effect; one of the eunuchs was called who told Hassan that his sister was at the palace and that he could see her. Hassan was overjoyed at this reply, but turned in embarrassment to Salaheddin.

"What will you do?" said he hesitatingly.

"Never mind me! I am going to take a walk on this beautiful road which runs along the palace park wall and goes to Tchamlidja, then I will come back here; you will find me at the café. But don't hurry yourself," he added; "remember that I feel enough pleasure in procuring you this interview to bear waiting patiently."

After having shaken his friend's hand, Hassan followed the eunuch into the palace, while Salaheddin leisurely took the road to Tchamlidja. When he had reached the hill-top he stopped near a *bostan* (fruit and vegetable garden) surrounded by a hazel-hedge and facing a palace whose lofty walls allowed only a glimpse of the trees of the imperial palace garden. A young fresh voice issuing from the neighboring garden rang out suddenly:

"Mihri-Hanoum, Mihri-Hanoum!" it said, "come and pick up the plums I throw down."

At the same time a tree was heard rustling as if its leaves were shaken by the wind, while a shower of fruit fell with a rattling noise on the grass.

Salaheddin raised his eyes towards the tree overhanging the road and perceived a girl squatting like a squirrel upon the boughs. Her white gauze mantle was half-opened, revealing her pink

silk antaré and her graceful form; her veil carelessly tied over her head only half-concealed her raven hair, while her beautiful face glowing with bright color, and her large sparkling eyes were screened only by the plum tree's green leaves from the young man's gaze.

The girl had evidently called her companion to attract the traveller's attention, but she had not expected so complete a success.

The enraptured Salaheddin stood motionless, his gaze fixed upon the young girl who hid herself in confusion behind the green boughs.

"Aïsha-Hanoum," said a voice from the foot of the tree, "why don't you shake down more plums?"

"Because I see no more that are ripe."

"Pshaw! that limb over the road is full of them."

Aïsha shook the limb indicated by her companion, and a quantity of black velvety plums fell near the young man who hastened to pick them up, while a young Turkish woman opened the garden gate to gather some also—but seeing Salaheddin, she uttered a little shriek and flew back into the garden. Aïsha profited by the moment in which the young man stooped to pick up the plums to glide quickly from the tree. Then a

whispering was heard behind the hedge where the young girls had sought refuge.

Salaheddin seemed petrified and rooted to the ground; suddenly the gate of the imperial park facing the bostan opened for the exit of a eunuch of the palace who, casting a suspicious glance at the officer crossed the road to enter the garden. But the young girls had prudently fastened the gate, and the eunuch was compelled to parley through the bars.

"Mihri-Hanoum," said he, "your brother Hassan is at the palace and wishes to speak to you."

"I am coming," cried the young girl eagerly.

Salaheddin discreetly moved off a few steps, and immediately the slave-girl appeared at the rustic gate and followed the eunuch into the palace garden; the bostan gate, however, was not closed quickly enough to prevent the young bey from once more seeing Aïsha, who smiled at him archly. — Salaheddin pretended to continue his ramble; but, instead of turning down towards the village as he had at first intended, he went up the hill so as to be able to make the circuit of the bostan without being observed. In fact, leaving the carriage road he entered a narrow path which followed the hazel-hedge and, when far

enough from the road, he climbed a large white mulberry which answered for an observatory, while its thick foliage hid him from the view of the occupants of the bostan.

A love romance is quickly constructed by two young heads; nothing more is needed than a few soft glances and that sympathy which seizes the heart and quickens its pulsations. Salaheddin desired to know the young Turkish girl; he felt the impatience of one turning over the opening pages of an interesting book, and he had a vague forewarning that this woman was to have an important part in his destiny. From the height of his improvised observatory he hoped to discover the extent of the garden, and especially a white mantle flitting through the flower-beds like a butterfly in spring-time.

Aïsha was not alone; two or three cadinas in long white tunics, a favorite rusticating wrap with Turkish women, were quietly smoking, seated by a little rivulet. At the foot of the garden was a small frame house, so low and so sheltered among the trees that it could not be perceived from the road.

Salaheddin could see the young girl; she more than once stood on tip-toe to scan the road and look through the gaps in the hedge; each time

frowning and pouting impatiently. Salaheddin smiled at these signs of discontent; for he thought she was looking for him, or at least he hoped so. Wandering to and fro, and stopping here to pluck a fruit and there a flower, she came to the foot of the very tree where Salaheddin was concealed, and at some distance from the Turkish women. He took advantage of this opportunity, and just as the fair girl was passing he threw her in his turn all the plums he had in his pocket. Now, a mulberry-tree which drops plums is a phenomenon sufficient to attract attention, so Aïsha lifted up her eyes at this wonder, but she was still more astonished when she recognized Salaheddin perched in the tree. She uttered a little cry of fear and pleasure which thrilled the young man, and in one leap he stood before Aïsha who leaned trembling against the hedge.

"What boldness is this, bey-effendi?" she cried in an agitated tone, gathering her veil over her crimson face. "Because of a little joke on a traveller, you have presumed to climb a tree and enter our bostan. Begone immediately, or I will call my mother, who will teach you the respect due to Mussulman ladies."

"How harsh your words are, hanoum! Why must such a pretty mouth speak so sharply! Do

you not see that I have been struck with your beauty? You cannot forbid me to love you—you can only forbid me to hope for some return of my love."

"I do not understand you, bey-effendi; I am not a slave to receive the declarations of a stranger," she added proudly.

"True, you are right, I am mad, forgive me! but if I have lost my senses, accuse only your beauty. My name is Salaheddin-Bey, and I am the son of General Hamid-Pasha who lives at Orta-Keuy; your friend Mihri-Hanoum's brother will give you further information about me if you desire, for I hope to meet you again," he added.

Aïsha made no reply, but her glance grew softer.

"Good-bye until then, bey-effendi," said she, moving away and gracefully making a half salute by raising her hand to her brow.

"Good-bye, hanoum!" said Salaheddin, and leaping the hedge found himself again on the road.

"How sympathetic he is!" murmured Aïsha, continuing her ramble through the garden.

"How charming she is!" thought the young officer, pursuing his way towards Beylerbey.

Hassan had not stayed as long as Salaheddin

had expected, or rather his thoughts, occupied with the young and beautiful Aïsha, had not permitted him to take accurate note of time. When the Circassian rejoined Salaheddin he said smiling:

"My sister saw you."

"I know it, she was in a bostan whence they threw some plums to me. But how did she recognize me?"

"I had your photograph with me and I said to her: 'See what a fine brother I have now.' Did you not say you would be my brother?"

"Yes, ... if I had a sister to give you."

Hassan [illegible] to make his meaning plainer; he added:

"She thinks you very handsome."

"Your sister is too kind."

"Did you see her also?"

"No; I did not presume to look at her; besides, her face was covered with a thick yashmak."

"Yes, that is by order of the Sultana who does not favor the notions of European emancipation."

"And I believe the Sultan is of the same opinion. He has come back from his travels more fanatical and despotic than before his departure."

Hassan made no reply; from the bottom of

his half-savage heart he belonged to the conservative party, and hated the new era which was dawning for his country.

Two volumes would not suffice to describe to the reader the beauties of the palaces through which this story will pass. Moreover, Europe has many palaces compared to which the Sultan's are very insignificant. If gold, brocades, and mosaics are found in profusion in the latter, on the other hand, works of art, those priceless masterpieces which are the pride of the monarchs and millionaires of our day, are absolutely unknown. Fire, which so often destroys the Mussulman palaces and konaks, forbids them a splendor which would have to be replaced after every conflagration. The Sultan being the head of religion is forbidden to have paintings or statuary representing living creatures. The picture galleries of the Ottoman sovereigns are therefore limited to some few landscapes by foreign painters passing through Constantinople and recommended by their ambassadors. Abdul-Aziz, desiring to appear a connoisseur in paintings, had engaged a tolerably skilful Polish artist to whom he gave stupid orders which must not be questioned. He made him alter the pictures which he purchased. The painter, not daring to disobey His Majesty's com-

mands, spoiled with great regret all the masterpieces that had chanced to come to the palace, and thus it is that the galleries of Dolma-Batché and Beylerbey swarm with pictures which their authors would surely disown if they could again behold them.

Next to Dolma-Batché, Beylerbey is the palace Abdul-Aziz preferred; he regularly spent the four summer months there and thus escaped without censure the burden of state affairs.

After His Majesty's return, the public daily expected changes that would improve the finances and give an impulse to commerce, agriculture, and the merchant service—three resources altogether neglected—which alone could place the empire on a level with other civilized nations if not above them. But the anticipation was vain and ended in general disappointment. His Majesty retired to Beylerbey with his harem and had no idea of leaving it for a long time.

Meanwhile A'ali-Pasha alone held in check the fury of the Cretan insurgents. Hobart-Pasha blockaded Syra with his fleet and Fuad-Pasha with his usual diplomacy foiled the demands of the European ambassadors. Midhat-Pasha, then governor of the Villayet of the Danube, was recalled to Constantinople and charged with the

presidency of the new council called Dari-Choura, or Supreme-War-Divan.

Certainly with these three men at the head of the government, Turkey could dispense with a Sultan; but Abdul-Aziz from the recesses of his palace was beginning to rule as a despot, and let it be understood that the civilizing reforms introduced up to that time were only policy on his part to gain his subjects' confidence and lull the impatience of the young party which had hailed his accession.

One morning in the month of September, 1867, Abdul-Aziz rose early (against his custom) and expressed a desire to take a ride upon the heights of Beylerbey. He ordered Arab horses to be saddled for himself and his aides and without any other retinue rode off through the hanging gardens which rise from grade to grade upon the mountain. He thus reached the park gate opening upon the road, and through an incomprehensible fancy in so morose a nature, he ordered the gate to be opened and found himself at the same spot where Salaheddin had stood two months before. Hesitating and suspicious, he scanned the deserted highway which on one side went down to the village and on the other ascended towards Beylerbey. The whispering of two voices made

him turn his eyes towards the handsome bostan in front of him, but the noise suddenly ceased and was followed by silence. The Sultan, full of distrust and alarm, re-entered the park, without seeming to care to enquire whence came the whispered conversation which his arrival had interrupted. Yet if his eyes had been sharper and could have penetrated the foliage, he might have beheld a charming tableau. The lovely Aïsha, seated upon a grassy mound, rested her beautiful head upon the shoulder of a black-haired woman of Circassian type with fiery dark eyes, while an old cadina was sleeping under the plum-tree's shade.

"Yes," said the Circassian sighing, "the Sultan has bewitched me, and I hardly dare to lift my eyes towards him; when he appears, my whole being thrills; there Aïsha," she added, taking her companion's hand and laying it upon her heart, "do you feel how it beats? His presence in this neighborhood at such an early hour astonishes me, for he always rises late."

"Perhaps he knows you are out and is looking for you."

"What nonsense, silly one! Why give me a vain hope? Do you think because you are idolized by the most charming youth that I shall

have the same good fortune when I have fixed my heart on so lofty a prize?"

"Are you not handsomer than I? have you not every reason to hope, being in the Validé's harem and seeing His Majesty every day?"

"Yes, I see him every day, but does he ever look at me? There are so many of us slaves, equally young and beautiful! He is indifferent to all, and especially to me, who tremble under his glance!"

"How passionate you are, Mihri-Hanoum," said Aïsha; "two months ago you were so enthusiastic about Salaheddin that I confess I was jealous; and now, it is the Sultan who has won your heart; will this love be lasting?"

"You cannot blame the impulses of a heart doomed to sigh in vain, and which asks only to pour out upon one being all the affection with which it overflows. Allah knows whether that being is worthy of it or not. Remember your mother whose story was told us by Fatma-Cadina. Do you believe she ever loved that old fat, ugly, and gluttonous pasha who died of a surfeit?"

"Alas, poor mother!" sighed Aïsha pensively; "my birth cost her her life and for that reason I believe I shall never be happy!"

Aïsha had hardly spoken these words when

Mihri, her companion, uttered a cry of alarm. She had perceived a pair of eyes looking at her through the hazel-hedge. The Circassian's cry awoke Fatma, and when she had explained the cause of her terror, the old Cadina went out on the road to look for the indiscreet promenader, but the latter had disappeared.

The young girls were quite bewildered.

"He must have heard our conversation."

"Who could he be?"

"I had warned you, my daughters," said Fatma, "never to talk loud near this hedge, for all the passers-by can see and hear you. Decidedly, this garden is too near the world and I must look at Tchamlidja for some konak completely hidden in the country."

"And we should see each other no more!" cried Mihri, "I could no longer embrace my dear Aïsha! You know it is impossible to leave the harem without the Sultana-Validé's permission, which is very hard to obtain because the chief-cadina is an old fanatic still more strict than her noble mistress. Dear Fatma-Hanoum, wait at least until our return to Dolma-Batché before changing your residence; my only happiness is to be with Aïsha."

The latter joined her entreaties to Mihri's, but

they were perhaps prompted by some other cause than friendship. Did not Salaheddin daily pass along this favorite road and throw her a bouquet over the leafy hedge, that balmy barrier to their loves?

Was Fatma unconscious of the affection born in her adopted daughter's heart, or did she feign to ignore it in order to encourage the young pair? Certain it is that in the small house inhabited by the two young women not a word had ever been whispered about the adventure of the plums, and Mihri was the only confidante of the great secret called a first love.

Salaheddin on his part had not been so discreet; he had confessed the deep affection he felt for Aïsha. Nimeta-Hanoum, who knew the highest hanoums and frequented the most distinguished harems, tried vainly to discover Aïsha's family. She had visited several konaks in Beylerbey, but none of the hanoums she questioned could tell her of the existence in the village of such a beauty. The female bath-keepers (the real gazettes of the country) had never heard of Aïsha, and yet, when there is a handsome girl in a Turkish, Greek, or Armenian house, the hamamjinas (bath-attendants) are perfectly informed of the qualities and defects of her beauty as well as of her name and

age. On his side Salaheddin had cunningly tried to obtain from Hassan-Bey some information about Aïsha's family; but Mihri when questioned by her brother had feigned not to understand of whom he spoke, and had given him no explanation. Nimeta-Hanoum then promised to seek a direct interview with Fatma; and she therefore repaired one day on some trifling pretext to the imperial palace of Beylerbey and asked for the bash-cadina of the Sultana-Validé's slaves; this woman being an intimate friend of Nimeta received her with open arms. Nimeta told her troubles and explained that she had come expressly to get Mihri to accompany her to Aïsha's house. It was then ten o'clock in the morning, and the hour of prayer was followed by breakfast.

"Do me the favor of spending the day here," said the bash-cadina; "we may perhaps get some information from Mihri, and this afternoon, on the pretext of a visit to the vineyards, we will go to Aïsha's."

The month of Shaban[1] is the time for grapes, the delicious *tchaouch uzum*—the best fruit of Asia. If Europe excels in pears, apples, plums, and red fruits, Asia has the grape and makes it the king of fruits. Have you ever eaten the beau-

1. September.

tiful gilded clusters each grain of which is the size of a mirabelle plum? Their exquisite taste is unrivalled, and the hills of Tchamlidja, famed for the excellent grapes they produce each year, attract in vintage crowds of lovers of the fruit of Bacchus. Every vineyard is daily visited by some harem coming to breakfast in its shade and to make ample provision of the *tchaouch* which is to be dried in the lofts for winter use. These picnics on the grass are real pleasure-parties for Oriental families, and God knows how they love them. Joyous groups of Turks, Armenians, Greeks, and Rayas are seen making their way towards Tchamlidja, Therapia, and Belgrade to enjoy the delights of a rustic meal. Moonlight is preferred; for the Orientals, despite their materialism, always have a tinge of poetry.

The Mussulman women especially are devoted to these dinners which make them forget their slavery. With what enthusiasm they prepare the viands to be taken! The harem resounds with songs and the bey smiles at seeing their artless, childlike joy. Great hampers containing the dishes are piled in the caïk or the ox-cart which conveys them to the vineyard. Once there, the women select the most favorable spot, the greenest grass, the place least exposed to the view of other prome-

naders. Then they begin to spread the carpets in the shade; the children fix swings to the trees, and their mothers who have raised their yashmaks quietly smoke their cigarettes, awaiting for moonrise to commence their repast and to fasten to the branches small lanterns whose dim light will make the moon's pale rays seem still more limpid.

Nothing is more alive with gayety and free good-humor than these exclusively feminine pleasure-parties. It would seem impossible for men to dispense so easily with female society and vice-versa. But here, the hanoum with her friends is under a sycamore, and twenty paces away is her husband with his friends, who dare not, because of traditional custom, turn their eyes towards the harem, while the women on their part watch them and make fun of them with a freedom of language which would seem very shocking to European ladies.

It was one of these picnics which the bash-cadina had proposed to Nimeta-Hanoum, and the latter willingly accepted, for where could a Turkish woman be found capable of declining a pleasure-party? The Sultana-Validé's picnic took place that evening in the upper park of Beylerbey, under the large trees through whose foliage the moon shed its silvery rays. Mihri, the Circassian

slave, being a good performer on the cithara (Oriental guitar) and having a fine sweet voice, was to be one of the attractions of the party. No stranger except Nimeta-Hanoum was invited and, court etiquette being banished for the nonce, the slave-girls played and romped through the park. A squad of eunuchs guarded the various avenues which led to the sward selected by the Sultanas.

Never had a more lovely night shone upon the Bosphorus, not even in the East noted for its magnificent moonlight. Eight o'clock had just struck; the Sultana-Validé, the Sultana, wife of Abdul-Aziz, the Sultana Alieh, his aunt, and the Sultanas, his nieces, Alieh and Osmanieh, daughters of Abdul-Mejid, were seated around a huge silver salver discussing the delicate viands prepared by the far-famed palace cooks. As to Nimeta-Hanoum, she had taken her place among the bash-cadinas, who not being slaves are considered as ladies-in-waiting to the princesses. Just then, Mihri, having finished singing a very popular Turkish song, was receiving the compliments of the princesses, and came towards Salaheddin's mother, who seized the opportunity to take her arm and draw her away from the luminous circle in which the sultanas were seated. In a jesting way she turned the conversation upon

Mihri's young friend, but Mihri, who until then had answered the old lady's questions unreservedly, became suddenly mute.

"Why this silence which grieves me, Mihri?" said Nimeta; "you must know that my son loves this young girl and desires to make her his wife. Why do you refuse to tell me anything about her? Is there a fearful mystery hidden under the apparently quiet life of these two women?"

"Yes," replied the slave stifling a sigh that might have been mistaken for compassion.

"Well, tell me what it is I pray you. It is true that my son is a stranger to you and my distress cannot touch you; but when a mother implores you in your mother's name, you cannot refuse her this favor! tell me this secret on which Salaheddin's happiness depends, and in which my own is involved."

"I have never known a mother, and you cannot appeal in her name. We slaves have no family feelings; do not question me, I cannot answer."

These bitter words made a profound impression upon Nimeta, and she forbore to insist. It was Mihri who spoke again.

"I must seem very strange to you hanoum-effendi, but perhaps you will cease to wonder when you know that I am jealous of Aïsha."

Nimeta was struck dumb, while Mihri's eyes flashed darkly.

"What! do you love my son?"

"I did love him, but I love him no longer; I yielded to Aïsha the first affection that sprang up in my heart but I will not let her take the second which is my life—yes, more than my life, for I would resign existence a thousand times to possess the other."

"What then? Does Aïsha love another man than my son?"

"She does not love him, but *he* has noticed her, and that is enough to excite my anger; for how can she resist him when she knows him?"

"Well then, if you are so jealous of the man you love, the surest means to remove Aïsha is to let her marry my son; once his wife and in my konak, what have you to fear?"

"That marriage must be delayed for Aïsha's happiness and my own."

"You are talking riddles.—Who will prevent it?"

"*I* will!" cried Mihri, her face flushing with anger.

"You forget that you are a slave and are speaking to a noble hanoum," said Nimeta *haughtily;* "I don't see what influence you can

exert over fate to dare threaten me so. You are crazy, my poor girl!"

And Nimeta left Mihri to relate this strange scene to the bash-cadina.

"I would advise you to watch that girl closely," she added; "she seems to hate Aïsha, and this makes me still more anxious to know her. The woman whom my son loves, far from exciting my jealousy as is frequently the case with mothers, seems to me the most perfect of her sex, and I feel attracted towards her by the strongest sympathy."

"Fear nothing hanoum-effendi, Mihri is a little fool whom we will bring to her senses. As for me, I advise you to profit by the opportunity to go into the neighboring garden with some of your women, and to obtain from the young girl herself all the information you desire, and which she cannot refuse giving to the mother of her beloved."

Nimeta-Hanoum at once acted upon her friend's advice; followed by her slaves, she went outside the park gate and found herself in front of Aïsha's garden, whose gate was wide open. A number of Turkish women were sitting there listening to the music in the imperial park. Some had climbed on the hedge, others were half

reclining on the grass or standing in the road in groups of four, six, and eight women, uniformly clad in long white cotton mantles. All these troops of phantoms, which seemed as if called up by the spirit of Night, were preceeded by a servant or a child holding a lantern, quite needless on such a bright night, but which looked like a will-o'-the-wisp, fit companion for these fantastic apparitions.

Nimeta entered the garden and asked a negress the name of the mistress of the bostan.

"I cannot tell you, hanoum; the garden was open when we came; nobody invited us in."

She advanced further under the trees, and perceived the cottage, gleaming white in the moonlight; she went straight towards it. Perhaps Aïsha's mother was in and might be found in the harem—but there was no light at the windows and the house was silent. Nimeta knocked and met with no response; she knocked again and no sound reached her ears; the house was certainly deserted, for it was still too early to suppose that the inmates were asleep. Nimeta thought perhaps the two women were out visiting; but then, why leave their garden open?

Many strange apprehensions excited by Mihri's threatening words disturbed the hanoum's mind;

she again passed through the various groups of women asking if any of them was the dweller in the garden, but received only negative answers; she was going to return to the imperial garden whose gate was left ajar, when a man of about fifty, looking like the servant of a well-to-do family, asked Nimeta what she wanted.

"I want to see Aïsha-Hanoum," she said.

The servant eyed her suspiciously.

"You belong to the palace?" he asked.

"No, I am only visiting there. I live in Orta-Keuy."

"Are you perchance. . . ."

"Salaheddin's mother."

"I was about to ask. . . ."

"Yes, I am Nimeta-Hanoum."

"Aïsha and her mother went away this morning, but they will return in a fortnight."

"Thanks for your information."

"Please let the bey-effendi know."

"I shall not fail to do so; may I know the reason of the hanoums' absence?"

"I have not been authorized to tell," said the servant discreetly bowing himself off.

Nimeta returned thoughtfully to the palace, where her absence was unnoticed, for the general attention was fixed upon the Arab dancers who,

castagnettes in hand were exhibiting various graceful dances.

That very evening, at the hour when the bash-cadina was making the nightly inspection of the slaves, she saw that Mihri was absent and that her bed had not been prepared with the others. She was about to enquire about it and to give the Circassian a good scolding if she had broken the rules of etiquette, when a eunuch came and whispered to her that Mihri had been summoned to the Sultan's apartments.

This unexpected favor changed Mihri's destiny in a single day. Yesterday she stood unnoticed among her companions; to-day they were all at her feet. These servile sentiments are not to be wondered at. All slaves are cowards, and the fear of displeasing makes them turn with every change which occurs in their masters' fortunes; if he is in favor, they fawn upon him; if in disgrace, they scorn him. The bash-cadina was the first to load with caresses the new favorite of whom maternity might at some future day make a Sultana. No one thought any more about the humble Aïsha whose house remained deserted, for it seemed as if Mihri's glory had frightened away her friend.

CHAPTER VI.

AÏSHA-HANOUM.

A LOVER cannot be kept long in ignorance of his beloved's residence. The fortnight announced by Aïsha's servant had not quite elapsed when the latter, authorized by his mistress informed Salaheddin that she would not return to Tchamlidja, and that she now dwelt at Beïcos with her old mother who was seriously ill. The address was confided to the lover under positive pledge of absolute secrecy.

"You know, my old Achmed," said Salaheddin, "that Aïsha's repose and happiness are dearer to me than my own; without asking to know anything more, I promise you not to reveal even to my mother the village where Aïsha dwells."

"Excuse me, bey-effendi, for insisting upon these precautions. . . . but if you knew the enemies who threaten that poor dear child confided to me by her father. . . ."

"Is it possible? Aïsha so young, so secluded from the world, has powerful enemies."

"Ah bey-effendi, do not question me. If only you were Aïsha's husband! I tremble lest Fatma should die, which may happen any day for she is no longer young; lest I myself should bid farewell to earth and that poor child be left in the power of her oppressors."

"Fear nothing as to that, Achmed, for Aïsha will be my wife if she consents, and I shall know how to defend her against the persecutors whom you will not name."

"They are in such high places, bey-effendi! Their names burn the lips that whisper them."

"But we are no longer under the rule of Sultan Mahmoud of ferocious memory.—There is justice in Turkey."

"There is none except in Heaven."

"You are an old skeptic, Achmed."

"And you, bey-effendi, are a young man to whom everything looks rose-colored because the palace walls are hung with European satin instead of Smyrna tapestry—but do not trust appearances. The silken folds are thick enough to smother the groans and sighs which are uttered there."

"You think me a child easily scared by fabulous stories, but I have been educated in Europe, dear Achmed, I know how to value *prejudices about* palace secrets."

"And it is exactly because I have not been brought up in Europe like you, bey-effendi, but have spent my life in the imperial palaces picking up the pashas' babooshes (slippers), that I tell you that barbarism still clings to our civilization. The blood of Osman still courses in the veins of our princes, and their European clothes can only conceal without suppressing its fire."

Such words from an attendant's lips moved Salaheddin deeply; he felt that Achmed must have had experiences very different from those of a European servant. Certain circumstances leave an indelible stamp, and Achmed bore it. His hair was gray with age, he looked timid and seemed to dread an imminent danger incessantly expected. Contact with such a man caused a thrill of apprehension. Salaheddin could not shake off this influence.

"An inevitable misfortune hangs over my dear Aïsha?" asked the young man.

"Yes, it hangs over her, but let us hope that Allah will not permit it to strike an innocent head as it did once before."

Achmed stopped as if oppressed by a painful memory and averted his eyes, then seeing Salaheddin silent before him, added:

"I *must not* alarm you too much. Fatma-

Hanoum wants to see you; when will you come to Beïcos?"

"To-night after the last prayer."

"Very well, bey-effendi; I will meet you at the steamboat-landing."

And Achmed left the young officer lost in thought and wondering what misfortune threatened his Aïsha.

That same night, true to his appointment, Salaheddin plainly clad in a gray dress (for fear that his uniform might attract attention) followed Achmed through the narrow streets of Beïcos. After ten minutes' walk, the latter stopped at a plain wooden house entirely surrounded with high palings, and after having taken a huge key from his pocket he opened the door of the salamlik and ushered in the officer. This ancient dwelling blackened by time had been purchased by Fatma through the late Mehemet-Pasha's liberality, and it was in this very house, sixteen years before, that she had concealed little Aïsha from Alieh-Sultana's vengeful search.

A vague feeling of sadness mingled with Salaheddin's joy on entering the dwelling which sheltered his beloved. About to obtain the long desired happiness of being welcomed by Aïsha's *mother, he had* a presentiment of a thousand

obstacles to arise before he could possess the woman he loved.

The young bey was introduced into one of the harem chambers where Fatma-Hanoum was squatting in Oriental fashion on the corner of the sofa, wrapped in a thick cotton quilt, her head covered with a white veil tied under her chin.

"Come in bey-effendi, come in," she said faintly, "seeing that Salaheddin deeply moved had stopped at the harem door. I am an old cadina, no longer afraid to converse with men; besides, I am old enough to be your grandmother, and if I sent for you in violation of Turkish customs which command mothers alone to make their children's matches, if I did not address myself first to Nimeta-Hanoum in response to the advances she made in coming to see me, it is because you see, bey-effendi, my time is short; I feel death very near," she added, in a low tone looking uneasily towards one of the tapestries which hung over the harem doors, as if afraid of being overheard by some one concealed there.

Salaheddin, stunned by this flood of words, looked at the cadina and vainly sought in her withered features some resemblance to Aïsha. Could that old Fatma be the mother of the young girl he loved? Soon however he recovered his

self-possession; he guessed that Aïsha was not far off, concealed perchance behind one of the tapestry hangings fluttering in the wind.

"You have done wisely, hanoum," replied Salaheddin respectfully; "and though I pray Allah to preserve you for your daughter's sake, I am ready to prove all my respect and obedience and all the love I feel for Aïsha-Hanoum."

"And you really love her sincerely?" asked Fatma with a searching look at the young man.

"With all the strength of my heart," replied the latter flushing.

"Are you capable of daring everything to possess her?"

"Everything in this world."

"It is then a true affection, not a passing fancy which yields at the first obstacle?"

"No, hanoum, it is a deep and passionate love; though born of a smile it is as solid and lasting as if long years. "

"Do you know who Aïsha is?"

"She is beautiful, lovely, and pure; she is the bride of my choice."

"Do you not fear connecting yourself with an humble family?"

"Aïsha's house is more to me than a prince's palace."

"It is well, Salaheddin-Bey; I am satisfied with your replies. I know who you are; your word is not that of a common man. I have heard you praised by your enemies—it is your highest eulogy."

Salaheddin bowed.

"Do you believe, child," continued the old cadina with a genial smile which illumined her pale countenance for a moment, "that I have been in ignorance of your strolls around our bostan and the innocent talk you exchanged with Aïsha? You thought you were keeping your secret from me, but nothing is hidden from the heart of a mother, or rather of a sincere friend, for I must confess it, I am not Aïsha's mother."

Salaheddin made no reply for he had guessed this.

"I must tell you all our misfortunes," she added gloomily. "Alas, what tears and blood were the price of that young houri's life!"

And Fatma excitedly related Ikbal's tragic story to Salaheddin. The young officer shuddered when he heard the account of the slave's fearful death.

"Is it possible," he cried, "that in our days such odious crimes are perpetrated?"

"Vengeance is terrible in a Mussulman's hand,

and still more when he knows nothing can interrupt its course."

"Who knows, hanoum, whether Sultans will not one day fear their subjects?"

"We are not in Europe;[1] there are no laws against the sovereign's tyranny; this is Allah's will."

"No, it cannot be Allah's will. Allah cannot permit the destruction of His own empire; and it will take place if it is not prevented, if the government is abandoned to tyrants instead of rulers, to despots instead of men of progress!"

"Bey-effendi, for Heaven's sake don't meddle with politics! Let things take their course and men go as they will, as is a good Ottoman's duty. But above all if you wish to be Aïsha's husband, have nothing to do with these young reformers who have returned from Europe full of new and impracticable ideas. One must love God more than his family, and his family more than his country!"

"What hanoum, love of country! I will never abjure that; but fear nothing, my hand and heart are strong enough both to defend my wife and deliver my native land."

1. The reader has no doubt already noticed that the Turks always speak of themselves as apart from Europe. Though on European soil, they feel they are only encamped. Asia is their home and their *traditions predict their* return there.—*Transl.*

When Salaheddin returned to Orta-Keuy it was nearly midnight; for he had been almost three-quarters of an hour crossing in a caïk against a head-wind, and the Bosphorus was rough that night. All the windows of Hamid-Pasha's salamlik were still lighted up. The young man thought that some unexpected visitor must have come during his absence. On entering the vestibule of the konak he jostled against busy servants carrying trunks, in which they hastily packed clothing and under-garments which were passed to them through the wheel in the salamlik wall.[1]

"Hello! Yussouf, Hussein," cried Salaheddin to the servants, "what is the meaning of these preparations for departure?"

"But they are your Excellency's."

"What do you mean?"

"We must hurry, as you start at one o'clock and it is now past midnight," replied Yussouf.

"Well now, those fellows are crazy," thought Salaheddin, and pushing open the door of the saloon he found Hamid-Pasha conversing with Hassan and some neighbors.

"Ah here you come at last!" said the general on perceiving his son.

1. This is a sort of horizontal dumb-waiter to facilitate the service between the harem and the salamlik without permitting the women to be seen.

"I have been waiting for you two hours, dear bey-effendi," said Hassan shaking hands with Salaheddin. "I am the bearer of an order from His Majesty which commands you to accompany Kassim-Pasha who sets out to-night for Marseilles, and thence for Paris to deliver to the emperor two pair of Arab horses presented to him by the Sultan."

"Very well but do you know what caused His Majesty to choose me for a mission which I must confess is a very disagreeable one, just at this time?"

"I understand it as well as you," said the Circassian. "I cannot tell what prompted so sudden a departure, but after all your journey will not be very long."

"I hope so indeed!"

Hassan-Bey, while conversing, had drawn his friend into the recess of a window.

"I heard," he whispered, "that this little mishap results from His Majesty's having seen you a few days ago talking with a Moslem girl on the road to Beylerbey.—You know, my friend, how strict His Majesty is on the question of morals."

"But good-heavens! that girl is my betrothed and will soon be my wife."

"The Sultan was ignorant of this; and after all, this little penance is not very severe."

Salaheddin sighed. He was to depart at once without taking leave of Aïsha. His heart shrank even while hoping for a prompt return.

"Hassan, you are my friend," he continued after a moment's reflection; "you know my love for Aïsha. I recommend her to you; she has powerful enemies be a brother to her."

"You may rely upon me, dear Salaheddin," replied the Circassian warmly.

"And now I must go and bid adieu to my mother.—Wait for me, we will go to Constantinople together."

Salaheddin repaired to the haremlik, whilst Hassan returned to General Hamid-Pasha and his visitors who received him very obsequiously. Since his sister had become bash-hanoum, *i.e.*, favorite, all the dignitaries congratulated him upon his promotion to a lieutenantcy which was an evidence of Mihri's favor.

That very night Kassim-Pasha and Salaheddin left the port of Constantinople upon the magnificent steamer *Sultanieh*, and a week later the Minister of Foreign Affairs received from Marseilles this telegram from Kassim-Pasha, famous for its style and brevity:

"I—and other animals landed safely."

CHAPTER VII.

FROM SLAVE TO SULTANA.

OUR readers no doubt want to know by what series of lucky events the love-stricken Mihri had suddenly become the favorite of Abdul-Aziz.

Fortune plays some charming and fearful tricks which make her by turns adored and hated by the human race. Fearful Sphinx! she makes a sport of our lives and hearts; we owe to her our most entrancing pleasures and our cruelest emotions.

Mihri was destined to experience her favors, which no apparent cause could foreshadow.

The morning of the day on which the sultanas were to give a picnic, Abdul-Aziz was sitting in one of the numerous kiosks of the Beylerbey palace which are scattered in the various parts of the garden that afford the best view of the long shining ribbon of the Bosphorus. The one which he occupied commanded a prospect of the road leading to Tchamlidja and of the park whose centre is a limpid and beautiful lake. Thence a magnificent panorama is visible, and certainly, proud

and happy must be the sovereign who contemplating this landscape can exclaim: "All this glorious land is mine!"

Nevertheless at that moment Abdul-Aziz did not seem to be thinking of the splendid country outspread before his gaze. Hidden behind a eunuch who crouched near a silken curtain, he scanned the yellow sandy road which was aglow with the bright sunlight; but not a living being was in sight.

"Perhaps it is still too early," he said to the eunuch; "our pretty birds will not brave the sun."

"Oh! they are not afraid of it. It was earlier still when last Monday I perceived the charming turtle doves hiding behind the hedge."

"And you say they are handsome and in love with me?"

"They are both handsome, but only one has confessed her love for Your Majesty."

"Are you very certain she had no idea of being overheard?" asked the Sultan with his habitual distrust.

"Oh she was making the avowal in a low tone, and only my sharp Nubian ears were capable of catching her words soft as the breeze and burning as the simoon."

"I wish I had been in your place," said Abd-

ul-Aziz; "I continually hear words of love—but who can tell whether women feel in their hearts what they express with their lips."

"No mistake as to that one, for she does not belong to Your Majesty's harem, but to your illustrious mother's."

"Strange that I have not noticed her."

"Among so many beautiful slaves it is easy enough to overlook one more. But here she comes," cried the eunuch; "she is crossing the road to join her friend. Look! the latter is coming herself to open the garden gate."

In fact Abdul-Aziz saw Aïsha, enveloped in her white abayet (Arab burnous), awaiting Mihri at the gate. The two young girls embraced, their mingled veils forming a graceful group, then they entered the garden.

"Let us hasten to the bostan!" cried the Sultan with an eagerness quite foreign to his indolent and haughty disposition.

"Your Majesty is in fine humor this morning," said a eunuch who was just entering the pavilion with a profound salutation.

"We are on a love chase, my dear Ali," said His Majesty.

Then, taking the eunuch's arm, he turned towards the new-comer.

"Are you coming with us, Ali?"

"I'll come; there can't be too many dogs in the pack."

"By the way, how is my illustrious aunt?"

"Her Highness Alieh-Sultana kisses Your Majesty's hands; thank Allah, my mistress is perfectly well."

During this brief conversation the Sultan, accompanied by the two blacks, came down the steps of the kiosk and advanced towards the upper end of the park.

"What a madcap this Aboushendi is!" said Abdul-Aziz. "He takes me after a new houri as if I were a young student crazy about love and women."

"There is much difference in women," said Ali, who wished to back up his comrade; "without knowing the prize on which Your Majesty deigns to fix your eyes I dare say she is charming, for Aboushendi is a good judge."

"We shall see," and the Sultan moved on, supported by the two eunuchs and stopping from time to time, for his heavy weight forbade rapid locomotion.

Abdul-Aziz was still what is conventionally called a fine man. Tall, stout, with a fierce proud air, his black eyes were very handsome, and above

all very tender when resting upon a beautiful woman.

The three reached the garden gate left ajar by Mihri; but as Abdul-Aziz was about to enter first, he suddenly sprang back half closing the gate after him.

"What is it, Your Majesty?" exclaimed both the eunuchs.

"We are not alone in the chase—look."

The Nubians stealthily advanced and perceived through the half-open gate a young officer wearing the uniform of His Majesty's staff who had just stopped at the entrance of the bostan where the young girls were still clasping each other's waists. Mihri, the Circassian, on seeing Salaheddin, swiftly escaped from her friend's embrace and fell plump into the midst of the three observers without even having time to utter an exclamation of fear and surprise. But His Majesty did not deign to notice the luckless slave who, not knowing which way to look, trembled at being discovered playing truant—enjoying one moment's freedom; she stood aside breathless and anxious.

Mihri perceived with bitter jealousy the attention attracted by her friend; in fact, the Sultan had not turned his eyes from Aïsha who, entirely *unsuspicious*, was carelessly resting her elbows

on Salaheddin's horse and yielding her hands to her lover's kisses, her eyes fixed upon his, listening with delight to the words he whispered in her ear.

Was it the sight of the two lovers which had struck Abdul-Aziz, or was it Aïsha's radiant beauty? Mihri would have given her life to know.

The Sultan's rapture did not last more than a minute, which seemed an age to the poor jealous girl; angrily closing the gate, with scarcely a glance at Mihri he turned back towards the kiosk with Aboushendi, muttering:

"This is the way our Mussulman girls are being brought up. These accursed ideas of love and liberty are taught them by those whom we permit to be educated in Europe. They call that progress!" he continued: "Yes, progress which our holy laws forbid, and which produces nothing but shame!"

Mihri had remained motionless; one glance at the villanous expression of the eunuch Ali's black face had terrified her. It was like that of a wild beast snuffing fresh blood. The grim satisfaction which lighted up his bony features sent a chill through the slave girl's frame. She was too well accustomed to read eunuchs' coun-

tenances not to understand all the meaning of Ali's.

"You are that little Ikbal's friend?" said the Nubian catching Mihri by the arm to help her along, a familiar kindness often exhibited by eunuchs towards their favored slaves.

"Ikbal!..." said Mihri turning pale, "I don't know what you mean!...."

"How long has that girl been living at Beylerbey?" replied the eunuch without appearing to notice Mihri's confusion.

"I don't know, I am sure."

"She is betrothed to Salaheddin Bey?"

"I don't think...."

"What! you don't think? You are that girl's friend and confidante, and you don't know that?"

And as the slave remained silent:

"I am stupid to ask a little fool like you so many questions. What do I care for your answers when I know everything?"

And dropping Mihri's arm, he left her to walk on alone towards the palace.

At that moment two very different passions were striving for mastery in the Circassian's soul; her friendship for Aïsha and her jealousy; one word would destroy or save her friend. Luckily *the good impulse* prevailed over the bad, and on

reaching the harem she called a little slave girl who was entirely devoted to her.

"Look here, my little Sahosh, you love me dearly, don't you?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because you can do me an important favor."

"Speak quick then."

"But you must be careful."

"You can rely on me."

"Above all be cautious. You must put on your veil, take a piastre in your hand, and if any one asks where you are going, say: 'I am going to buy some chekers' (sugar plums)."

"What next?"

"Then you will run along the Beylerbey road towards Tchamlidja, and you will stop at old Fatma's bostan."

"Your friend Aïsha's mother?"

"Exactly; you will go straight to her and whisper in her ear: 'Mihri sends me to tell you that the eunuch Ali has discovered your presence at Beylerbey.'"

"That's all?"

"Yes; will you remember all that?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Run quick then, my little Sahosh; come take

two kisses as your reward, and if ever I become a Sultana. . . ."

"What then?" asked Sahosh who had stopped.

"You must ask me for backsheesh little goose."

* * * * *

His Majesty had had the sulks all day. Neither his eunuchs' coarse jokes nor his ministers' important despatches had smoothed his brow. Towards night, however, Abdul-Aziz drew near the kiosk window.

The night was calm, the sky serene, and the moon with its soft light cast a white haze like a thin veil over the trees. It was one of those summer nights in which the soul yields to tender emotions and a thousand perfumes stir the senses and quicken the pulse. There is a stimulating breath no European breeze can equal in these nocturnal emanations of Oriental climes. Pious and profane souls are very differently affected; the former turns to God and thanks and glorifies Him in this magnificent nature; the latter turns to the earth and whispers the name of a mortal lover.

Abdul-Aziz was under the influence of this

lovely night, and his head resting upon the window-sill gave token that his emotion was altogether earthly. Suddenly as if to enhance the charm of this bewitching night a sweet and thrilling voice, a melodious song, reached the Sultan's ears and startled him. The sound of that vibrating voice was borne by the breeze without the loss of a note or a word. The song was a love plaint and the singer gave it a passionate and mournful expression. It was the ballad called "Jealousy."

Abdul-Aziz listened almost breathlessly, then he called his favorite eunuch.

"Come here Aboushendi, listen; who is that singing thus in the upper park?"

"No doubt some slave of the Sultana-Validé; her Highness gives a picnic to-night to the Sultanas your aunts."

"Go see who it is, and bring the songstress here. I want to hear her again."

The voice had ceased and the eunuch hastened to obey his royal master.

He found Mihri surrounded by her companions who, to reward her for having sung so well were weaving a crown of natural flowers which they placed upon her head.

"Look, here is Aboushendi!" cried the girls.

"Come and hear the 'Lover's Departure,' which Mihri is going to sing."

"Pshaw! it is stupid to hear a song by the singer's side," said the Nubian. "You don't know how much better it is to hear it from a distance!"

"You are mistaken: Mihri's voice is soft and pleases the ear without vexing it with sharp notes like so many of our great musicians."

"Well, I assert the contrary; come with me," added Aboushendi taking Mihri's arm to her astonishment; "we will go into the neighboring thicket, and then, my beauties, you will see whether songs don't improve with distance."

"Well, we will see."

And the young girls scattered about the lawn like so many white butterflies among flowers, while Mihri and the eunuch went towards the kiosk.

"Why do you bring me here?" asked the Circassian as the Nubian was helping her up the steps of the portico.

"His Majesty wants to hear you, and you will do your best, I hope! Here is the nightingale!" he continued ushering the slave into the saloon.

The Sultan could not help casting an admiring glance at the lovely girl who had just appeared on the threshold and was standing confused with her *cithara in hand.*

"Come in my child—don't be afraid," said the Sovereign in a gentle tone.

"Come, sit down—His Majesty permits you—and sing for him that famous 'Lover's Departure,' which seems to be your best piece."

With these words Aboushendi threw down a cushion on which Mihri sank almost mechanically.

The poor girl pale as death fitted on her fingers the horn thimbles necessary to play on the cithara and struck a few chords; but when about to begin her voice failed her and she burst into sobs.

"Allah! who is this girl and what is the meaning of her tears?" asked Abdul-Aziz in astonishment.

"Your Majesty, it is Mihri, the slave we saw this morning in the park and she is the one who is in love with you?" added the Nubian in a whisper.

The Sultan looked at the slave with interest, and the poor child who had recovered her courage began a song which she rendered with charming expression. His Majesty, full of enthusiasm, took a magnificent diamond ring from his little finger and put it on Mihri's hand, while the latter humbly kissed the skirt of his coat.

"And this is how a slave becomes a Sultana!" said Aboushendi the next day when relating this event to one of his comrades.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE'S ARRIVAL.

IT was the 11th of September, 1869. The port of Constantinople and the Bosphorus presented a magnificent spectacle due to the unusual number of boats, steamers, and caïks moving from every point towards the Seraglio landing. They were all gay with flags and so overloaded with people that the gunwales grazed the water. In the Old Seraglio garden, on the Scutari shore which faces it, on the quays of Dolma-Batché, in front of the mosk of Orta-Keuy, and in all the villages which line the Bosphorus as far as Beylerbey, a dense line of spectators formed a party-colored line extending each side of the Straits. The gratings of the harem windows were raised, and the hanoums could be seen scanning with their glasses the blue horizon of the Marmora Sea.

This excitement of an entire population, this

curiosity shared by all ranks, sects, and nations was caused by the arrival of the Empress of the French.

It was the first time that a French Sovereign had visited the East as a guest and a friend, and the prestige which always surrounds a woman, especially a queen, penetrated even these Mussulman harems. It was gratifying to the Turkish women, so entirely ignored by their laws of etiquette, to see so much homage and such great honors paid to a woman; for it showed them that there are some countries where women rank as high as men.

Abdul-Aziz, who made no secret of the strong impression this lovely sovereign had produced upon him, had made gorgeous preparations to welcome her. The Beylerbey palace was newly furnished throughout, and the chamber intended for the Empress was copied exactly from that in the Tuileries. A magnificent caïk, a marvel of beauty, had been built expressly for her. The eyes were dazzled by the fairy-like bark in which rich carvings and gold gave lustre to velvet and satin.

A refulgent sunshine, a blue sky of which the East is so lavish, favored this reception with their brightness. The splendid steamer "Eagle" entered the port through the white smoke of

artillery salutes fired simultaneously from Scutari, Dolma-Batché, and the Turkish iron-clads. The imperial steamer was escorted by numerous others whose flags of tricolored silk were spangled with the Napoleonic golden bees.

The Eagle cast anchor in front of the Beylerbey palace, and His Majesty the Sultan, who had just arrived in his caïk, stepped from it into the Empress's which was waiting at Beylerbey, and went on board the Eagle. The Turkish band stationed on the pier struck up the Aziziet march, and from the French main-mast the Turkish flag was hoisted and saluted with shouts and hurrahs.

A few minutes later, Abdul-Aziz wearing the uniform of mousheer (field-marshal) came down the Eagle's gangway holding the hand of the Empress, who took her seat on his right in the caïk. She wore an elegant *faille* dress and a white bonnet and seemed much impressed by this reception and still more by the splendid panorama offered to her gaze.

All the Diplomatic Corps and the distinguished persons to be presented to the Empress were assembled at the Beylerbey palace. Abdul-Aziz then returned to Dolma-Batché where his guest was to dine that evening.

Amid the confusion of visitors who crowded

the salons of the palace, a young Circassian lieutenant tried to push his way to be presented to the Empress. Swearing in an undertone and red as a robin, he reached the dense circle formed around Her Majesty, but it was a wall of bending backs. The Circassian casting a hopeless glance over the bowing heads perceived a familiar face, and his countenance brightened. The man whom he had noticed saw him also and made way for him between a dowager's arm-chair and a diplomat's big paunch.

"Whew!" said the officer as soon as he could catch his breath in a window-recess: "How are you Salaheddin? You have saved my life; a moment more and I would have been smothered before reaching Her Majesty."

"I will present you at the first favorable opening; but it is impossible just now. The Russian and Austrian ambassadors are talking to the Empress."

"Poor Salaheddin!" continued Hassan-Bey. "Who could have foreseen that you were to stay two years at the Paris legation when you thought your mission would detain you but a few days."

"Yes, my ill-luck was complete. — On pretext of promoting me one grade, I was kept away from here. Fortunately I always had good news, and this

helped me to patiently bear the cruel absence. How much I have to thank you for, Hassan!" continued Salaheddin, while the Circassian turned absolutely purple. "Your letters always did me so much good!"

"I wish I could have done more yet," stammered the Circassian evidently disconcerted by Salaheddin's gratitude. "I thought that. . . ."

"Oh I know all I owe you," replied the young man; "but come, the moment is propitious for presenting you to Her Majesty."

And Salaheddin, by virtue of his office as aide-de-camp to the Empress, presented his friend Hassan-Bey, who was very graciously received, and as he spoke no French:

"You must excuse me to your countrymen," said the Empress to Salaheddin, "for not being able to reply to the compliments they offer me in Turkish; but you who speak both languages reply to them for me. I could not have a better interpreter."

The two officers made a deep obeisance and withdrew into the small garden which surrounds the palace and stretches along the shore.

"Your duties keep you closely confined," said Hassan; "when will you be able to go to Orta-*Keuy*?"

"Upon my word, I must get off somehow. I have shaken hands with my father this morning in the crowd, but I have not embraced my mother, and yet I can see our house just over yonder!—you see, there, up on the hill?"

"True, I see it distinctly. . . ." And while Salaheddin gazed lovingly at the paternal home, Hassan-Bey sought some pretext to escape the questions his friend would certainly ask, and which he had strong reasons for not answering.

"At last I am in Turkey!" said Salaheddin, "and I feel as if just waking from a dream. Well, now I shall stay even if I have to resign.—I must get married!"

"You will do well. . . ." and Hassan looked uneasily around.

"You gave me no news of Fatma-Hanoum in your last letter dated the 10th of March; have you not written me since? What is the cause of your long silence?"

"I wrote you twice; did you not get my letters?" replied the Circassian with feigned surprise.

"But Fatma-Hanoum, Aïsha. . . . I have at last uttered her dear name—how are they, tell me?"

"Aïsha-Hanoum is perfectly well; that, I can

assure you. . . . As to Fatma, I thought you knew that two months ago. "

"What?"

"She died."

"Died, great Heavens! and Aïsha is left alone with Achmed? Why did not my mother take her to Orta-Keuy? Poor girl! what must she think of me! And she is right, quite right. What sorrow to be left alone thus!"

"I am sorry to leave you," said Hassan, cutting short Salaheddin's laments; "but I see the eunuch of my sister Mihri-Sultana signaling me to come over."

"Mihri-Sultana?"

"Yes, did you not know she had given birth to a prince?"

"I knew the Sultan had another son but was ignorant of your sister's being its mother."

"Well, good-bye my dear Bey."

Hassan made his escape, leaving the unfortunate Salaheddin dazed with the news and depressed by many sad thoughts. What! Fatma-Hanoum was dead and his mother had not adopted Aïsha! It was hardly possible, for she had promised to do so. His father had looked gloomy and had not spoken a word about his betrothed. What *did it all mean?* Yet Aïsha was alive, Hassan had

said so, and he felt from the quickened beating of his heart that his beloved was near. Already he longed to hasten to Beïcos and cursed the duty which kept him near the Empress. He envied the gulls flying freely through the air and said to himself: " Man puts on the fetters of pride, and then he envies the freedom of birds!"

Salaheddin turned back to the salons on the ground-floor reserved exclusively for receptions to see if his father was still among the fast-thinning groups that were beginning to leave the palace; but Hamid-Pasha had gone among the first.

The poor aide-de-camp sank down upon a sofa, his thoughts intent upon Aïsha whom he hoped soon to meet. He would obtain her forgiveness if she accused him of neglect; he had such sweet things to tell her and such good reasons to give! He was arranging them in his mind when all at once he remembered that he had to accompany the Empress to Dolma-Batché, and his visit to Beïcos was impossible that night.

As he was vainly seeking some means of escape, his reverie was interrupted by the rustle of a silk dress. The Empress, in a magnificent toilet trimmed with rich lace and blazing with diamonds, had just entered the salon. Salaheddin sprang

up but had no time to summon a smile, and the Empress perceived his depression.

"I thought that our arrival in the Bosphorus had filled you with joy," she said kindly—"but now you seem disappointed."

"Your Majesty, some family troubles. . . ."

"Did your father bring you bad news? But, now I think of it, you have a mother and must be anxious to see her?"

And as Salaheddin's face lighted up with joy at these words, the Empress added:

"You are relieved from duty for to-night, sir; let me see you to-morrow."

"How grateful I am to your Majesty!" replied Salaheddin with joyous eagerness.

The Empress with a graceful gesture of dismissal departed with all her attendants, leaving Salaheddin on shore, happier than a king at escaping for awhile the yoke of etiquette.

It was not however to see his mother that he hurried off so, for he took a caïk and was rowed to Beïcos. Filial love pales before a warmer passion, though it resumes its empire when the fire is burnt out and nothing remains of another love except glowing ashes.

It takes a full hour to go from Beylerbey to *Beïcos, which* is the last village on the Asiatic

coast next to the entrance of the Black Sea; it was therefore quite dark when Salaheddin traversed the little hamlet which was faintly lighted by a few lamps scattered here and there by a stingy municipal administration.

At first, he had some difficulty in finding his way, for the young Bey had been only once in Beïcos, and was then accompanied by Achmed. He tried to remember the way, but two years had elapsed, the night was dark and a recent fire had swept away one-half of the village next to the sea. For a moment he trembled at the thought that Aïsha's house had been consumed by the flames, but at the turn of a street he recognized Fatma's humble home.

Salaheddin knocked trembling; the door was opened almost immediately and a venerable white-bearded mollah appeared holding a tallow candle dripping on an old brass candlestick.

"Excuse me, Mollah-Effendi," said Salaheddin, "is not this Achmed-Effendi's house?"

"Which Achmed-Effendi? the young barber who has just been married, or the old dervish?"

"Neither of them; Achmed-Effendi, the retainer of the late Mehemet-Pasha Tunisly; is not this Fatma-Hanoum's konak?"

"The old cadina died two months ago . . . didn't

you know it? But do me the honor to come in, effendi; let me have the pleasure of offering you coffee and cigarettes."

Salaheddin entered with a quaking heart; Aïsha was certainly not there. In fact he was told that the house had been sold after Fatma's death, but that nothing was known about Aïsha and Achmed; it was certain that they had left Beïcos since the end of July. Salaheddin thanked the old mollah for the information and ran back to his caïk.

"Quick, to Orta-Keuy!" he cried springing into the boat and waking the two rowers who had fallen asleep wrapped in their caftans.

They seized their oars, seated themselves leisurely on the white sheep-skins used as cushions, and rowed swiftly towards Orta-Keuy.

"Aïsha is at my mother's," thought the young man. "What a fool I was not to go there at first! instead of hastening to embrace my mother I have given way to emotions which have upset me without cause. Luckily they think I am at Dolma-Batché, and they will not be surprised at home to see me arrive so late."

And Salaheddin, fully relieved, stretched himself languidly upon the cushions of the caïk, *and throwing back* his head abandoned himself

to that sweet somnolence which sometimes creeps over the senses when, after long fatigues and painful emotions we touch the brink of happiness.

"Here we are, bey-effendi," cried one of the caïkjis who thought Salaheddin was asleep, while the other rose to fasten his boat-hook to the little wooden bridge. Then helping the young man to alight, he bade him good night; but the latter was already rapidly traversing the deserted streets and ascending the slope leading to the konak. The road had never seemed so long; at last he perceived the bostan in the shadow and the white outlines of the house on his right.

"She is asleep," he thought seeing the harem windows nearly dark; and he plied the door-knocker vigorously.

"Welcome, bey-effendi!" cried the servants as soon as they recognized their young master. "Thank God, your worship looks better than ever. Your journey has improved you."

"Where is my father, Yussouf?"

"He has gone into the harem."

Salaheddin rushed to the harem door and knocked loudly.

"What is it?" asked a slave.

"Open! it is I, Salaheddin."

"The bey-effendi!" exclaimed several glad

voices. The excitement was increasing in the harem, and Salaheddin secretly blessed the women's clatter which could not fail to awake Aïsha.

"My son, my dear son!" cried Nimeta, and immediately the door opened and Salaheddin fell upon his mother's neck and was almost smothered with kisses.

"Here at last after two years! Allah! how long it did seem! Yet they were shorter in comparison than to-day, when I knew you to be at Beylerbey where I could not go to meet you! For the first time in my life I wished I were a European so as to be able to enter the palace and see you sooner."

This torrent of words and these tender caresses bewildered Salaheddin, who let his mother lead him to the sofa; one question burned upon his lips and almost unconsciously escaped them.

"Aïsha?" said he.

Nimeta without seeming to hear again clasped her son's neck and kissed him.

"Aïsha, where is she?" he repeated. This time the hanoum looked at him with deep tenderness mingled with profound pity. Salaheddin could not mistake the look and cried in a tone of anguish:

"*Mother, let me see Aïsha!*"

A sob was Nimeta's only reply as she covered her face with her hands.

"Aïsha is dead!" cried Salaheddin, rising pale as a ghost with a wild expression which terrified the slaves.

"No, my son, she is not dead," said Hamid-Pasha, gravely entering at that moment.

"Then she is married?"

Nimeta, still sobbing, made a gesture of denial.

"What is the matter then? She is neither dead nor married, yet she is not here! Is she false?"

"My son, if Aïsha was unworthy of you, your mother would not weep. She would cure you of your love with one word. No—some terrible events removed her from our protection."

"And where is she now?"

"At the imperial palace."

Salaheddin was hushed; such an emotion could be expressed neither by tears nor anger; he remained cold—almost calm; only his lips quivered nervously as he asked ironically:

"May I be permitted to know the particulars?"

"I am going to tell you all," said Nimeta, checking her tears.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HAWK AND THE DOVE.

"My dear child," the hanoum began, "you must not give way to grief for there is room for hope. Allah Kereem!" (God is great!) "I wish I could have shown you Aïsha, saying: 'Here is your betrothed who has remained in our harem under the protection of my love; she is true and loving.' I had made it a point according to your wishes to go to Beïcos the very day after your departure, to inform Fatma and her adopted daughter of your unexpected journey. The desire to see Aïsha made the errand pleasant; I need not tell you how charmed I was with her beauty, the elegance of her manners (for Fatma brought her up like a noble hanoum); and above all I was touched with the grief she manifested at hearing of your absence. She could not check her tears. Every time I went to Beïcos I was accompanied by Resminour, your faithful nurse, on whose discretion I could rely. Your friend Hassan-Bey *also went to visit* old Achmed, but not often, when

one day he chanced to meet Aïsha in the salamlik; she fled, but not quick enough to avoid leaving a burning impression in the Circassian's heart. This no doubt explains his frequent visits to Beïcos and his zeal to serve Achmed and to become his sister the Sultana's messenger to the young girl. He often came in her name to offer her flowers, fruit, and jewels; but Fatma sent back the latter, and Aïsha received the Circassian's attentions so scornfully that he finally stopped going to Beïcos. Fatma-Hanoum, whom disease prostrated more and more, confided to me the anxiety she felt at her approaching end and often said: 'If Salaheddin-Bey were only here!'

"One morning in the month of July last, Achmed came to me in great trouble: 'Fatma is dying,' said he, 'come quick.' I started for Beïcos, and when I arrived at the harem I found the poor cadina at the last gasp. Seeing me enter, she rose half dazed from the divan on which she was lying. 'Aïsha!' she cried, 'take charge of Aïsha and beware of Alieh-Sultana!' Dear Aïsha rushed weeping to her foster-mother who clasped her in her arms and then fell back motionless. That embrace was her last breath. The neighbors' wails and Aïsha's sobs bewildered me. Nevertheless I told Resminour to put a veil and a

mantle over the young girl whom I was about to take away with me, when a court-carriage stopped in front of the door and a eunuch rudely entered, scattering the crowd of weeping neighbors and making way for an elderly, richly-dressed cadina.

"'Her Highness Alieh-Sultana!' cried the eunuch.

"This dreaded name thrilled me with terror. Aïsha drew close to me, and old Achmed hid behind the by-standers.

"'Do you hear, Fatma-Hanoum? Her Highness honors you with a visit.'

"'Fatma-Hanoum is dead,' cried the neighbors with one voice, showing the cadina's body covered with a Persian rug.

"'Ali, where have you brought me?' cried the Sultana recoiling a step or two. 'Come, let us go, this dead woman frightens me.'

"But the eunuch was not disconcerted. Vultures love the scent of death; he cast a searching glance around the assemblage, discovered Achmed, pounced upon him, and dragged him before the Sultana.

"'Here is the traitor Achmed!' said he. 'Sixteen years have turned him gray but have not changed his features. Your Highness can judge *for yourself.*'

"Achmed did not know what to say. At another time perhaps he might have kept his wits, but the Sultana's presence, Fatma's death, and all these combined emotions were too much for him; he bent his head.

"'Yes,' said the Sultana, 'I recognize the base servant who helped his master to betray me; and Mehemet-Pasha's child, what have you done with her? Where is she?'

"I started, and Aïsha's hand trembled in mine.

"'She is dead,' said Achmed without looking towards us through fear of discovery.

"'What! young Aïsha is dead too, that blossom of health, the young betrothed of Salaheddin-Bey? Can that be so?'

"'Certainly, Your Highness.'

"The women of the neighborhood who understood nothing of this dialogue remained mute. Ali tried to recognize our features hidden by the thick yashmaks, and scanned the faces of all the hanoums. But he had seen Aïsha only once, and her lovely eyes dimmed with tears had lost for the moment their bright expression. He was therefore unable to recognize us and we were breathing more freely, thinking Achmed's lie had saved us. Alas! what is written in the book of

Fate is inevitable, and we must bow to the will of Allah!

"Ali was getting weary of asking questions of Achmed who had recovered his presence of mind, and the Sultana, ill at ease in that chamber of death, was turning towards the door when suddenly another unexpected personage, sent by hell itself, entered the room.

"'Hassan-Bey!' cried the eunuch who felt an auxiliary in the new-comer; 'come and learn the ravages death has wrought in this house!'

"'I know that Fatma is dead,' said the Circassian after having obsequiously saluted the Sultana, 'and I have come to offer my services to the lovely Aïsha-Hanoum, since her betrothed has broken his faith to her!'"

"The wretch!" exclaimed Salaheddin clenching his hands threateningly.

"Listen to the end, my son; a wound must be probed to the bottom before it can be cured."

"Go on then," said the young man with a sigh of acquiescence.

"When we heard Hassan's words we felt we were lost, and the hapless Achmed cast a despairing glance at us. Ali was radiant and the Sultana stopped on the door-sill.

"'*That man* was lying then,' said she point-

ing to Achmed; 'he assured us that Aïsha was dead.'

"'Dead! no, no!' cried Hassan; 'she must be here. I had good spies in the neighborhood, and they assured me they saw her yesterday.'

"'Don't you see, you wretch, what a liar, scoundrel and traitor you are!' said Ali shaking the poor fellow.

"'I have spoken nothing but the truth.'

"'It is a lie!' exclaimed Hassan with increasing rage; 'what have you done with Aïsha? where is she? If you don't tell where she is, you shall go to jail and rot there like the dog you are!'

"'Take me to jail if you want to,' said Achmed coolly; 'I don't know where she is.'

"'We will find out without your help,' said the Circassian. He went to the stairs and called a woman, who came in trembling. What was my dismay when I recognized Sanieh, a slave-girl I had discharged a few days before!

"'Come,' said Hassan roughly; 'tell us which of these veiled women is your mistress and which Aïsha?'

"The neighbors hearing these words fled; I hastened to follow, dragging Aïsha with me, when the treacherous Sanieh pointed to us saying:

"'Here is Nimeta-Hanoum and this one is Aïsha.'

"Then my anger broke out. Haughtily addressing Hassan-Bey who had placed himself before the door to stop us, I said:

"'What do you mean? By what right do you prevent a noble hanoum from returning to her home?'

"'I have no wish to stop you, venerable hanoum,' said Hassan with a semblance of respect, 'only the young girl who accompanies you.'

"'That girl is my daughter, the betrothed of Salaheddin-Bey. She is under my protection. Let no one dare touch her!'

"'You forget the presence of Her Highness Sultana-Alieh,' said the eunuch insolently. 'This Aïsha is the daughter of one of Her Highness's slaves by Mehemet-Pasha. She belongs doubly to the Sultana, both as a slave and a step-daughter.'

"'But I tell you she is to be my son's wife!'

"'She is to be,' said Hassan ironically, 'but she is not yet. When Salaheddin-Bey returns, you may ask the Sultana to give her to your son if Her Highness is willing to grant your request.'

"'I won't go with the Sultana,' cried Aïsha; '*she is red with* my mother's blood!'

"'Treachery must be punished,' cried the eunuch with emphasis.

"'Well, yours shall be!' I exclaimed fiercely; 'Ali, Hassan, and you, Sultana, shall pay dearly for your crimes and tyranny!'

"Anger gave me strength; but we were two women and one old man against two men and the Sultana's retainers, who had come in on hearing the outcry.

"'Your threats cannot reach me,' said the Sultana haughtily sweeping before us; then to her servants: 'Remove this girl,' said she.

"The cowardly attendants sprang at us; poor Achmed tried in vain to defend us; they seized and bound him, and our struggles were in vain. Aïsha was torn from my arms in which she had taken refuge, and I fell fainting while the wretches carried off your betrothed and her aged defender. When I recovered my senses I was alone with Fatma's corpse. The sight terrified me and gave me strength to flee from that dwelling desecrated by violence and betrayed by false friendship. I wept with rage in my caïk, and my helplessness only increased my despair.

"When I reached Orta-Keuy I was wild with grief. Your father went the next day to the palace to ask an audience from the Sultan, but was

unable to obtain it. His friends advised him not to make a scandal about the matter and to patiently await your return. Anyway, who would dare bring a charge against Hassan, the Sultan's favorite aide and his dear Mihri's brother?

"Nevertheless, Aïsha was allowed to write to me but not to see me; it is she who informed me that Achmed is imprisoned at Ak-Seraï in punishment for his devotion to his hapless mistress; moreover I am certain she loves you and hopes you will free her. Our enemies are so certain of impunity that they don't take the trouble to read our correspondence. It seems that Hassan expects to obtain Aïsha's hand as the reward of his treachery. Such is the story of our misfortunes, Salaheddin, and the reason why you did not find your betrothed in our harem to-night."

"What do you think will be the end of all this?" Hamid-Pasha asked his son.

"I think," said Salaheddin, "that one single drop sometimes suffices to overflow a full vase, and that the people's justice is a powerful hand which breaks the foul cup of debauchery between kings' teeth."

CHAPTER X.

TCHÉRAGAN.

IMAGINE a Moorish palace with its slender columns of pink and green marbles and oriental sculptures which impart to white marble the appearance of lace-work, situated on the sea-shore, separated from the water by a stone-paved slope continually washed by the waves, with gilded gates, chiselled or painted arabesques upon the walls, fountains, galleries, in fact all the distinctive features of that Moorish architecture so well adapted to the lavish expenditures of the wealthy, and you will have only a feeble idea of Tchéragan palace. Suffice it to say that one hundred and fifty million francs were spent on this royal caprice, and the most skilful decorators and upholsterers in Europe were employed to embellish it.

Since Mihri-Sultana had ruled over Abdul-Aziz's heart, numberless expenses swelled the budget of the State; such as new mosks costing a trifle of thirty millions, barracks, fountains, country-houses, kiosks, and jewels for the harem. In the

meantime A'ali-Pasha and Fuad and Midhat-Pashas vainly entreated the Sultan to regulate the finances, to provide for the wants of the provinces, to increase the army supplies; all their advice was useless. The statesmen's remonstrances were baffled by the babble of a favorite crazed by sudden elevation. Mihri had insisted upon building a palace finer than Dolma-Batché and at a short distance from it, to show the world that the new Sultana surpassed her predecessor.

Following the Sultana-Validé's advice, all the progressive officials were gradually discharged, and fanatical grey-beards summoned in their stead. *New-Turkey* was driven from all the offices. Its only hope was in the three ministers, two of whom were soon to be lost to the empire.

On the day that the French empress repaired to Tchéragan palace to visit Mihri-Sultana, the latter wore six millions worth of pearls and emeralds. Her women were covered with jewels in order to dazzle the Empress, as if diamonds could disguise the chains of slavery! Can a European woman ever envy a Mussulman or desire to exchange her precious liberty for magnificence? Who knows not the Hungarian verses:

" Two things in this world give worth to *life*,
Liberty and love.
For love I would give life,
But for liberty I would give love!"

Learning that the Empress, after having gone to Dolma-Batché to call on the Sultana-Validé and on the Sultan's chief-wife, the mother of the eldest son Yussouf-Izzetdin, was to call also upon Mihri—the Sultanas, daughters of Abdul-Mejid, and the other princesses, came over to enhance with their presence the splendor of the favorite's court. Alieh-Sultana made her appearance with her entire retinue.

When Mihri perceived Aïsha among Alieh's followers, she ran to her, embraced her, and forgetting her new dignity, asked her by what unlucky chance she had fallen into her step-mother's clutches.

Aïsha agitated by the sight of her former friend and especially the splendor which surrounded her, remained speechless and bewildered. What a change two years had made in their destinies, so much alike formerly! Aïsha had suffered all the anguish of despair and terror, and wept countless tears over the love which consumed her heart; she had fallen from the arms of a tender foster-mother into the power of a cruel mis-

tress, and Mihri had had every kind of good fortune; love, glory, and power! Mihri the slave had become a Sultana, Aïsha-Hanoum had become a slave!

These thoughts crowding the poor girl's mind on seeing the favorite, prevented her from answering her eager questions. Mihri probably guessed the cause, for she took her former friend into a small salon, made her sit by her, and listened with rapt attention to Aïsha's narrative.

"Is it possible that Hassan behaved so badly to you?" she cried. "That's the reason he was silent when I asked about you. Love makes us sometimes commit base actions; but you must forgive him, for he loves you no doubt."

"Your Highness, I have sworn never to love any other husband than Salaheddin."

"Then you love him still?"

"As much as Your Highness loves the Sultan."

"Dear child, you may rest assured that I was ignorant of all your trouble; else I would have tried to deliver you. Did I not save you once from Ali? Why did you not make an effort to see me?"

"Your Highness is invisible! so much greatness surrounds you! How could a poor prisoner

reach you? It is only the extraordinary occasion of the Empress's visit that decided the Sultana to bring us with her."

"Salaheddin-Bey is here, and will no doubt endeavor to propitiate the Sultana; but have no fear, Aïsha, you have a powerful friend in me. . . . I had warned Nimeta-Hanoum that your marriage to Salaheddin was impossible at that time for it would have put Alieh-Sultana upon your track, and in fact the eunuch Ali played spy upon your lover's mother; she has been the involuntary cause of your misfortune."

"Ah don't say that, Your Highness! Dear Nimeta-Hanoum loved me like a mother; she had her hand wounded while defending me against the cowards. . . ." Aïsha corrected herself. . . . "against the Sultana's servants."

"At last, Allah has permitted me to see you again to-day."

"Your Highness, do try to influence the Sultana in my favor. Here at your feet I implore you, save me from marrying Hassan-Bey—protect me, noble Sultana!"

Aïsha was on her knees before Mihri, pressing to her lips the folds of her silken antaré. The Circassian was touched at seeing her friend at her

feet; she raised her kindly and promised to protect her.

Comforted by her words, Aïsha returned with a more smiling face to the salon in which stood her cruel mistress Alieh-Sultana, who attributed the young girl's flitting joy to the pleasure of wearing the jewels with which she was covered.

Six o'clock had just struck when the Empress's caïk stopped before the steps of Tchéragan palace. All the slaves had crowded the windows to see the royal visitor and thus concealed behind the gratings which darken the windows, Aïsha could see Salaheddin in his brilliant uniform helping the court ladies to enter the caïk. The young girl's eyes filled with tears at the sight of her beloved, so near and yet separated by so many impassable obstacles, while these elegant Christian women were free to talk to him and take his hand. "Ah if I only were a European!" she sighed.

Two magnificent tables had been set in two separate halls; one was served in European fashion; Sèvres dinner-service, Saxony table-linen, silver-gilt plate, and Bohemian glass. The other was thoroughly Turkish. An immense chased-silver waiter was set upon a low stand of mother-of-pearl and surrounded with fine white Broussa silk fringe, richly embroidered with gold. Silver-

gilt dishes studded with turquoises were placed in profusion upon this table around which were velvet cushions.

Mihri gracefully offered the Empress her choice between these two services, but the latter as a special compliment to her hostess preferred the Turkish; and all the Mussulman women were charmed with her choice. Whilst the French ladies seated themselves on the cushions around the table presided over by Mihri, the Sultanas all sat down at the European table and bravely drank champagne to the Empress's health. It was the first time these Mussulman ladies had tasted the liquor forbidden by Mohammed. The young women grew hilarious and the old drowsy.

Singers and dancers added variety to the entertainment; the Empress smoked perfumed cigarettes. She had near her two charming young women as interpreters: Nazuleh-Hanoum, niece of the Khedive of Egypt, who speaks French very well, and Madame Miram-Bey, officially appointed dragoman to Her Majesty.

Alieh-Sultana had retired to one of the deserted salons to indulge in slumber. Aïsha, more free and light-hearted, ran over all the stairs and galleries of the harem with the other young girls, who all enjoyed this brief moment of freedom due

to the fête. Aïsha knew that Salaheddin was in the salamlik with the other officers; she had seen him, he was under the same roof, and this slender consolation made the poor girl happy—she had had so little joy for two years past.

Towards ten o'clock, His Majesty the Sultan was announced. The Sultanas hastened to welcome him, humbly kissing the skirts of his coat; for although princesses, they are still only the Sultan's slaves.

Abdul-Aziz was in fine humor that night and listened with delight to the somewhat exaggerated compliments his royal guest's courtesy lavished upon his court.

"Her Majesty thinks that the Mussulman ladies are the most charming on earth," said the dragoman; "their costume is lovely, their diamonds are magnificent but cannot equal the fire of their eyes."

The Sultan cast a complacent glance at the young beauties who crowded around him; among them, more lovely than all, shone Mihri.

To prove that beauty was not his favorite's only gift he desired Mihri to sing. Either the Empress's presence confused Mihri or the heady Frankish wine impaired her voice; for it is certain that she did not sing as well as usual and her august

sovereign seemed much vexed in consequence. To dispel the cloud gathered upon His Majesty's brow Mihri called Aïsha and begged her to sing an Arab air, to which a dozen little Egyptian girls were to dance. The young girl dared not refuse the Sultana who had promised her protection and upon whom her future happiness might depend; so, notwithstanding the emotion caused by so brilliant an audience she commenced with a melodious and timid voice the song of "Yassedi." The graceful dance of the young Egyptians, their glittering dresses and Aïsha's sweet voice were highly successful. Great applause was bestowed upon the dancers and the singer who were called back and made to repeat. Aïsha, blushing with confusion, hid her face behind the tambourine which she used as an accompaniment. The Sultan smiled again most graciously, and Mihri recovered her spirits.

After the dance the slaves, as is customary, brought sherbets and coffee, and offered them on bended knee to the noble visitors. Although not belonging to Mihri's harem, Aïsha was charged with the duty of bringing the Sultan's coffee, and she waited with respectful deference until His Majesty had finished drinking to take back the cup. Abdul-Aziz drank slowly, fixing his gaze upon Aïsha

who was confused by the look. The Sultan was trying to remember where he had seen that lovely face.

Mihri and Alieh-Sultana noticed this attention, the former angrily, the latter with grim satisfaction. Finally the Sultan returned the empty cup to the kneeling Aïsha and, a thing hitherto unheard of, said to her: "Thanks!"

"Aïsha must marry Salaheddin immediately," thought Mihri, "and leave Constantinople; this is the second time the Sultan has noticed her and he noticed me only once!"

"His Majesty finds Aïsha to his taste; here is the means of blending my revenge with my interest," murmured Alieh-Sultana with a wicked smile.

Abdul-Aziz seemed absent-minded the rest of the evening and the anxious Mihri longed for the end of this torment; more than once she perceived her royal husband's eyes fastened upon Aïsha. At last, towards midnight, the Empress took leave of her hosts. Abdul-Aziz escorted her to her caïk, then entering his own he returned to Dolma-Batché without one word to Mihri.

"Well what are we after all, we sultanas?" cried Mihri angrily: "a sovereign's toy, the sport of an hour, less than a shadow in presence of their

greatness! while these free women, these accursed Christians, have the right to proudly lift their scornful heads before us because they wear a crown which cannot be removed."

"You are wrong to think so, my daughter, and you don't speak like a true believer," said Alieh-Sultana, who had heard this outburst of rage: "the crown of an empress is as fragile as our royal fillet. You are dependent upon a capricious husband; she is subject to the caprices of a whole nation."

These consoling words could not calm Mihri, especially coming from Alieh-Sultana. So, as soon as her illustrious guests had departed, Mihri wrote to her brother Hassan:

"Hassan, you must love your sister and value her happiness and power above your own desires. I tell you this because you are perhaps about to cause an irreparable disaster—the downfall of your own dear Mihri. The Sultan has noticed Aïsha to-night. She *must not* be seen again by him, you understand? *I will* that she marry Salaheddin; to-morrow he shall be appointed muzevir (governor) of a distant province; they shall depart together as soon as possible. Such is your sister's will and desire. MIHRI-SULTANA."

The Sultan had hardly returned to Dolma-Batché when he summoned Aboushendi his faithful eunuch and said to him:

"I saw to-night a charming girl whom I had already remarked on the Beylerbey road. How is it that betrothed as she was then, she is now a slave in the imperial palace?"

"That's one of the master-strokes of Ali, your illustrious aunt's chief eunuch."

"What! this girl belongs to Alieh-Sultana?"

"Yes, Your Majesty."

Abdul-Aziz remained absorbed in thought.

"I am not sleepy," he said, perceiving the kis-agassi or chief eunuch of the harem enter; "Aboushendi is going to sing me some sharkees (Arab songs); open this window looking out upon the sea. I want to dream but not to sleep."

CHAPTER XI.

SALAHEDDIN'S NUPTIALS.

THERE was a succession of *fêtes* at the imperial palaces, at which Salaheddin was compelled to be present with a smiling face concealing his

breaking heart. At last, on the 3d of October, the French Empress left Constantinople to attend the opening of the Suez Canal and the poor aide-de-camp obtained a month's leave. He really did not know what use to make of it. His strongest desire was revenge upon Hassan-Bey, the false friend who had betrayed Aïsha into her cruel step-mother's power. But this would have ensured his family's ruin and the certain loss of his betrothed. He therefore resolved to wait longer; perhaps later he would be able at one stroke to deliver Aïsha and punish Hassan. The hapless Salaheddin did not suspect that a danger more terrible than all the others threatened his beloved.

Aïsha had not failed to inform Nimeta-Hanoum of Mihri's fair promises. Salaheddin did not share the hopes indulged by his mother and Aïsha. The Sultana could not be sincere; what interest could she have in displeasing her brother?

Nevertheless, on the 6th of October, Nimeta received another message from Aïsha, who was wild with joy; Alieh-Sultana having yielded to Mihri's wishes consented to her being transferred to the favorite's harem. Aïsha was to leave Salih-bazar that very night for Tchéragan. She knew not indeed how to explain this sudden change in Alieh-Sultana; she wrote that perhaps it was due

to the Sultan's making her a present of a tchiflik (estate) at Boyadji-keuy and this princely gift had induced the Sultana to make some concessions to Mihri.

"Should we be glad or sorry?" said Salaheddin. "Is not Mihri taking Aïsha to her palace in order to give her later to Hassan-Bey?"

"Has not Aïsha declared that she would never marry him?" cried Nimeta-Hanoum; "no, we must not despair. Does not sunshine follow after rain? why should not happiness gladden your life, my son? Come, cheer up, Aïsha is happy; it is enough to make you so."

We are easily persuaded to believe what we desire; Salaheddin was beguiled into smiling and his joy was complete when he learned that Hassan-Bey had just been ordered on a mission to Candia, and would be absent six months.

Later came a letter from Aïsha, dated October 10th, confirming her lover's hopes.

"Respected and beloved hanoum," she wrote to Nimeta. "I am now with the excellent Mihri-Sultana who condescends to treat me as a friend instead of the humblest of her subjects. Hassan-Bey is going away, and my august sovereign promises me that as soon as she can, for like us

she has obstacles to overcome, I shall be the wife of your beloved son Salaheddin-Bey. In the meantime, Her Highness invites you, venerable and dear hanoum, to come and see me at Tchéragan palace. I am full of joy to think I can soon embrace you. Your loving daughter

AÏSHA."

While hope brightened Salaheddin's home, the following conversation was taking place between Ali and Aboushendi, the chief eunuchs of Alieh-Sultana and Abdul-Aziz.

"So you, like a skilful diplomat, intercepted the letter Mihri-Sultana had sent her brother," said Ali strolling under the shade of Dolma-Batché.

"Certainly, if we were to mind the jealousies of these slaves lifted up into favor, there would be no such thing as living in peace at the palace."

"Her Highness, my illustrious mistress, was greatly pleased at His Majesty's present, but she easily guessed its motive."

"What I wonder at," said Aboushendi, "is Mihri-Sultana's consenting to receive Aïsha at Tchéragan, knowing that the Sultan has a fancy for her."

"Between you and me, you must watch over

the Sultana; she had a long conversation yesterday with my mistress when she came to fetch Aïsha. They talked fast and in a whisper; although hidden behind a silken hanging, I could catch only these words uttered by Mihri: 'Your Highness is certain that this poison disfigures the body without endangering life?'—'I am sure of the first, not of the last,' replied my mistress.

"'Well, that is enough,' added Mihri, interrupted by Aïsha's sudden appearance."

"I am obliged to you for this information," replied Aboushendi; "yet I can't believe that Mihri would injure her friend."

"Not if her friend became her rival?"

"You certainly have a very bad opinion of women...."

"Because I am constantly living among them."

"A fine compliment!"

"And because I have seen them at work."

"I thought you hated Aïsha, and now you ask me to protect her against Mihri?"

"I neither love nor hate Aïsha; as long as my mistress was trying to find her, I helped her like a faithful sleuth-hound on the track of game; now that Aïsha interests us no longer (I mean my mistress and me), I am indifferent and give you disinterested advice."

"That is worthy of a true son of Nubia—Allah guard you! Ali, good-bye!" said Aboushendi.

The eunuchs parted.

Five days later, Nimeta-Hanoum was admitted into Tchéragan palace. Aïsha met her joyfully, but a swelling puffed her face and slightly disfigured the young beauty; a mother's heart does not stop at such trifles and the hanoum pressed the young girl tenderly to her bosom. Mihri-Sultana deigned to appear a moment; she promised Nimeta her aid and advised her to prepare everything for the nuptials which must not be delayed.

A week passed; Nimeta urged on by the impatient Salaheddin returned to the palace. The unfortunate bride certainly had no luck: the swelling of her face was aggravated by very sore eyes, and an eruption covered the young girl's body and face with pimples. Aïsha suffered a little, and was greatly annoyed at finding herself so disfigured. Nimeta comforted her with the assurance that she would soon get over it.

"But I don't want Salaheddin to see me in this condition; perhaps I should produce the same impression on him that I gave the Sultan yesterday."

"How so?"

"His Majesty had deigned to call me to bring his narghilé. On seeing me, he made a gesture of disgust and turned away his head. . . . I almost burst into tears. Mihri-Sultana laughed at my confusion . . . but if it had been Salaheddin, I should have died of grief."

"Well, we will wait until you recover your beauty, little coquette."

Mihri-Sultana became more and more attentive and kind to her protégé, especially since Abdul-Aziz had shown his aversion to the poor girl. The Sultana seemed desirous to repair all the harm done by her brother and Alieh-Sultana. It was through her influence that Salaheddin-Bey was appointed mutesserif (sub-prefect) of the villayet of Salonica, and was granted one thousand Turkish pounds for his wife's dowry. The young aide-de-camp's good fortune was quickly known, and everyone congratulated him upon marrying a séraily (palace woman), which is a signal mark of favor from the Sultan.

Nevertheless Aïsha, still ailing, persisted in delaying a union which she had so ardently desired. Salaheddin, who could hardly believe in the happiness of possessing his beloved, blamed this girlish coquetry and prevailed upon Nimeta

to bring Aïsha to her harem. Aïsha sighed, and yielded upon the condition that she should not see Salaheddin until she was entirely well.

Before leaving the imperial palace Aïsha warmly thanked Mihri-Sultana, who seemed disturbed by these protestations of gratitude; and when the young girl exclaimed: "May Allah repay you and your son for all you have done for me!" Mihri uttered a smothered cry and fled away sobbing.

"How good she is, and how much she loves you!" repeated Nimeta in her joy.

At last Aïsha was safe in the home of her friends. Her indisposition tormented Salaheddin less than her pertinacity in refusing to be seen. One day, about the end of November, he entered his mother's room in a more agitated mood than usual and throwing his fez upon the sofa, said:

"Are you certain, mother, that Aïsha still loves me?"

"What a question to ask! Can you doubt it, my son?"

"Yes, I begin to doubt it; she has again put off a marriage which a thousand obstacles have already delayed too long. What is she waiting for now? Hassan's return? He will surely cause us new vexations unless we are married, and

then," he added warmly, "how can I live so near Aïsha, hear the sound of her voice, and yet be deprived of seeing her dear face? My patience is too hardly tried; tell her so, mother. When she consents to talk to me through the harem's closed door, I am beside myself. Some day, in spite of our holy laws and hospitality, I shall break it down."

"But Aïsha has greatly changed in appearance," said Nimeta.

"What is that to me? This illness will not last long, all the doctors say so; must that childish fancy retard our marriage? I love Aïsha from the bottom of my heart; I shall always love her, tell her that, mother. Only one thing could chill my affection—her persistence in her strange conduct. I am not such a coxcomb that bodily ailments can extinguish my love; but I might believe that hers has diminished."

Nimeta, seeing her son's excitement, went to Aïsha and related the scene which had just occurred. The danger of losing Salaheddin's affection prevailed over Aïsha's resolution, and to his great joy all the preparations were made for the nuptials.

Our hero thought no more about politics, parties, or patriotic reforms. Could he hate those who had restored to him his Aïsha? Who is

the man who at some time in his life has not thought like him? Love and woman will always be youth's loadstar; and in spite of sages there are many less noble objects for which men often sacrifice their honor and their lives.

On the 15th of December, the day of Salaheddin's marriage, numbers of hanoums crowded the salons of the haremlik, and Hamid-Pasha, who had followed his son to Salonica, helped him to do the honors of the salamlik.

According to custom Aïsha, after having put on the bride's embroidered antaré, had been covered with a long violet gauze veil with golden flowers, and her bridegroom was to conduct her to the salon where a throne had been prepared in her honor. All the windows were open, for a beautiful autumn sunshine flashed upon the sea which washed the konak's walls; it seemed as if the weather wished to do honor to the fête by donning its fairest azure robe.

Salaheddin thrilled with joy and emotion was summoned about ten o'clock to the bridal chamber. Aïsha was there wrapped in her veil which revealed the beautiful outlines of her figure. The bridegroom took the young girl's arm and according to the Mussulman rite conducted her alone to the salon of ceremony.

"Aïsha, my beloved, at last you are mine," he murmured in her ear.

"Will you always love me?" replied the trembling girl.

"All my life, my love!"

"Then, remove my veil, since it is Allah's will!"

Salaheddin eagerly tore away the long silken gauze, but at the sight of Aïsha's disfigured face he could not repress an exclamation of dismay and covered his eyes with his hand.

"My poor Aïsha, is it thus that they have restored you to me!"

The young girl gazed a moment at her bridegroom with deep sadness mingled with intense tenderness.

"Did I not forewarn you?" she said; then approaching him with sudden impulse, she exclaimed:—"Kiss me!"

Salaheddin involuntarily recoiled. Aïsha's spotted cheeks were not attractive even to a lover's lips; but the young man had no time to retract this first movement of repugnance, for before he could anticipate her, Aïsha had rushed to a window crying:

"Never yours without your love!" and when Salaheddin at one bound reached the casement,

Aïsha had already leaped out and the sea had closed over her form.

At Salaheddin's cry of rage and despair the crowd of guests rushed into the salon and held him back at the moment he was stepping over the balcony to plunge after his bride. He struggled to free himself from the hands of his mother and relatives, and with wild eyes and clenched teeth furiously shook off the women who clung to him with piercing shrieks.

This struggle lasted but a moment. Having freed himself from the panting hanoums, heedless of their tears, he was about to spring out after her, when an iron hand held him back; it was his father's.

"Be a man Salaheddin," said he; "Aïsha was already lost to you; the diamond powder, that slow poison of the harems, would have destroyed her life as certainly as the waves. You must live to avenge her; your mother implores you, and Aïsha's soul will inspire your efforts."

Salaheddin bowed his head; when grief attacks men, they are like marble columns under the hurricane; they resist or break. Salaheddin was destined to live for revenge.

CHAPTER XII.

MAHMOUD-PASHA.*

THE name of this successor of A'ali-Pasha was destined to become famous in Turkey; but unfortunately this renown, was very different from that of the man of genius whom he was called to succeed. It is always difficult to fill the place of a great statesman, an upright minister, and a true patriot like the late vizier. Mahmoud-Pasha however was not alarmed by the task imposed upon him. His first care being his own interest, the second the Sultan's caprices, he made himself a favorite in the imperial palace, and as the monarch was a despot, the vizier cared little for the rest. Now, *the rest* was "New-Turkey," which quivered with rage at every new loan, at every fresh injustice of the vizier who banished exiles in troops, and discharged the employés who dared express their opinions too openly. On pretence of economy, Mahmoud discharged numbers of

* Mahmoûd-Pasha Nedim — nicknamed by the population of Constantinople Mahmoudoff Nedimoff on account of his Russian affiliations and proclivities.—*Transl.*

attachés to the ministries, and reduced all the salaries except his own.

The first mutterings of a popular tempest already appeared in the publications of the young liberals. Their newspapers were suppressed. There was much discontent in Constantinople but no words, for the Turks are good dissemblers.

Silent wrath is the most dangerous, and it quietly seethed under the rule of Abdul-Aziz and his favorite minister. The Russian ambassador alone of the foreign ministers asserted that Mahmoud-Pasha was the very vizier that Turkey needed. The Russian politician in fact saw with joy each year of Mahmoud's power hasten by fifty years the downfall of Turkey. Constantinople, which was on the eve of becoming the equal of civilized cities, fell lower than ever; her credit was ruined, her provinces were laid waste or in rebellion. Such, in consequence of the acts of a fanatical and corrupt government, was the unfortunate Turkey of 1876–78. Midhat-Pasha, who was the leader of the reform party, tried in vain to open the Sultan's eyes. He was allowed three month's tenure of power to carry out his views. So short a time was insufficient to repair the blunders and deficits caused by Mahmoud. Scandalous revelations against the vizier's integrity were brought to light

without avail; Midhat was permitted to probe, but not to heal his country's wound.

After many viziers who resigned almost as soon as appointed, Mahmoud resumed the reins; he was the protégé of the imperial harem; he had married a Sultana, Abdul-Aziz's sister. Finally it was he who supplied the palace with enormous sums and asserted that Russia was the Sublime Porte's best ally. This opinion arose probably from the gushing flatteries the Russian ambassador lavished upon the vizier every time the latter struck a new blow at the credit of the State; while the other ambassadors hastened to the Sublime Porte to remonstrate against all these extravagancies, the cunning Russian diplomat shrugged his shoulders in disdain, telling the vizier: "Let them talk; they are incapable of appreciating you. Your Highness has just taken a step full of genius and energy—a measure demanded by the welfare of the empire!"

Turkey was therefore undermined in every direction; she was losing her credit abroad and rebellion was rife at home.

For four years past the Sultan had never shown himself except on Fridays when going to prayers at the mosk of Dolma-Batché facing his palace; at night he sometimes repaired to his new

kiosks at Tchamlidja or Flammour to indulge in the maudlin inebriety produced by rakee, the favorite liquor of the Orientals.

On one of those nights, the 16th of April, 1876, the Sultan and his vizier were in the kiosk of Flammour. Abdul-Aziz had greatly altered; he had grown very fat and his hair had turned white; an air of deep weariness and distrust alone imparted some expression to his dull countenance. The fat Mahmoud-Pasha, who exceeded his sovereign in weight, kept his seat on the edge of the sofa with difficulty; he was trying to amuse the Sultan by coarse jokes which found an appreciative audience only in the circle of eunuchs squatting at the extremity of the hall. His Majesty of late had quit laughing; the only sport he formerly liked, cock-fighting, no longer pleased him; and Flammour, the charming little palace hidden among fragrant lindens, seemed to him as dismal as the famous prison in the Castle of Seven Towers.

"Your Majesty really entertains too bad an opinion of your people," said Mahmoud gulping down glass after glass of rakee. "Our faithful minister of police has had nothing to record of late except a few knife stabs, amicably exchanged between Greek sailors. Yet in spite of all the assurances I give Your Majesty, you hardly dare

venture out; and when you come to Flammour you surround the park with a real garrison which only serves to scare away our fair Turkish ladies.

"Look, Sire, what a glorious night!" continued the vizier, whom the rakee had made poetical. "The bright moon shines above the trees; what an enchanting view! Sheltered in the lap of a delicious vale, we see nothing but mountains and through their opening a fair glimpse of the sea. The solitude of this kiosk would be truly charming were it not for those bayonets glittering among the trees."

"It is they however which defend their sovereign in case of attack," said the Sultan.

"Why these dark thoughts, Sire? Your reign is the most glorious of all those of the descendants of Omar. Russia, our ally, holds out a helping hand; our holy religion is flourishing, Constantinople is being renovated, Pera is rebuilding, and Europe is our dupe. What more would Your Majesty have?"

Abdul-Aziz, who was resting his forehead on the back of his blue satin arm-chair, suddenly raised his head.

"You are a faithful servant, Mahmoud, and you wish to quiet my fears; but don't I know that

New-Turkey is against me, and only awaits my death to hail as Sultan my nephew Mourad."

"New-Turkey is still in its infancy," replied Mahmoud scornfully; "it will have time to wait before seeing its dream realized. Moreover, so long as I am vizier, I can assure Your Majesty that nothing is to be feared from these mutineers; but if I should again fall from power, if Your Highness should permit yourself to be influenced against me. . . . oh then, I guarantee nothing! You will have placed yourself in the hands of your enemies."

Abdul-Aziz quailed in spite of himself and rose; Mahmoud was compelled to do likewise, his legs staggering under the weight of his bloated body. The Sultan paced around the salon, casting a suspicious glance at the silken hangings and at the eunuchs playing in a corner, crouched on the carpet like faithful dogs. Then, having fixed a searching gaze upon the garden now transformed into a bivouac, Abdul-Aziz returned to Mahmoud-Pasha, who was again at liberty to seat himself.

"It is not New-Turkey alone that causes my fears," whispered the Sultan; "it is the gloomy forebodings which of late torment Mihri-Sultana."

"Perhaps Her Highness's delicate condition is

the cause of the nervousness my high-born wife has already mentioned to me."

"No, Mahmoud, it cannot be her condition, for you must know that Mihri is not like the timid women who take fright at the tales of superstitious slaves, or who fear the evil-eye like the Greeks; she has always laughed at the terrible predictions of the Tchenguénés (fortune-tellers), at nightmares and omens; but the true cause of her depression, what has strongly impressed the Sultana and awakened in her terrors hitherto unknown, was my aunt Alieh-Sultana's sudden death. Unfortunately, she was visiting the harem when all at once, after having dined heartily, laughing and joking like a young woman, my aunt suddenly cried out that she saw two of her slaves, mother and daughter, dead at sixteen years interval. Rising pale and haggard she implored them to go away from her. The sultanas and slaves looked at her in wonder thinking that she had become insane; but my poor aunt repeated her cries and entreaties: 'Ikbal! Aïsha!' said she, addressing her deceased slaves, 'in Allah's name! don't approach me. Go back, you are covered with blood. . . . Slaves! drive away those women!' The hapless Sultana's eyes were staring, her hair bristling, her brow damp *with sweat,* and her haggard features struck terror

into the beholders of this fearful scene. 'Don't you see these wretches are stifling me?' she cried: 'Help, help! they are dragging me into the grave!' and Alieh fell writhing on the sofa.

"'Calm yourself, Highness, do not give away so,' said the sultanas endeavoring to quiet her; 'there is no one here but your relatives who love you, and your servants who respect you; in the Prophet's name, be yourself!' But Alieh seemed not to hear; other voices no doubt reached her troubled mind. She turned for a moment towards Mihri-Sultana who seemed frozen with terror: 'Look to yourself too!' she said, and Mihri fainted on hearing the poor maniac's words. Alieh's death agony continued only a few minutes: she breathed her last, imploring mercy from these accursed slaves, whom the angel Azraël had evoked from the dead to drag her to the tomb."

"It was a strangely fearful death," said the vizier, much moved by the Sultan's narrative.

"The physicians, summoned at once, declared that my aunt had died from apoplexy, preceded by a rush of blood to the brain, a very sufficient cause in the eyes of science for her delirium. Well, Mahmoud, since that fatal event, that is for three months past, Mihri has suffered frightfully

from insomnia. It seems that the sight of that horrible scene, in her delicate state, has greatly contributed to her illness. Continually beset by fearful visions, she will no longer stay alone in her chamber. I wished her to change her residence—even to leave Constantinople; but she would not consent. 'The danger is greater for you than for me,' she said; 'I will never leave you.'"

"I confess that it must be painful to Your Majesty to be constantly with a person whose mind is so greatly disturbed," replied Mahmoud. "You know that the spleen often has a fatal influence on those who come in contact with it. Are you not afraid also of the influence of this dreadful disease?"

"Yes, I dread it, Mahmoud, and you see its effects. I am always a prey to a thousand idle fears."

"Sire, don't let yourself be depressed. Leave the harem for awhile—seek recreation. . . ."

"This is why I try to find oblivion by drinking this liquor forbidden by our holy prophet," said Abdul-Aziz pouring out a glass of rakee while Mahmoud followed his example, saying:

"Forbidden, yes—but delicious!"

At that moment one of His Majesty's aides-*de-camp* was announced, and almost at the same

moment Hassan-Bey appeared on the threshold, so pale and haggard that the Sultan noticed the new-comer's expression with anxiety.

"Well, Hassan," he asked, "why are you so agitated? Is your sister worse?"

"Allah!" muttered Mahmoud, "these Circassian faces are enough to give one a chill!"

"Sire, it is not only my noble sister's health which makes me uneasy, but Your Majesty's safety. I have just come straight from Stamboul; a conspiracy is forming there against Your Majesty."

"You hear?" said Abdul-Aziz turning reproachfully to his minister.

"What! That is impossible!" replied the latter calmly.

"Nevertheless I have just been present at a meeting of conspirators," said the Circassian. "If I am pale, it is with rage. If I am haggard, it is with fatigue."

"Sit down Hassan, my brave Hassan," replied the Sultan who had frowned on seeing his minister's placidity; "come, take a glass of rakee and tell us briefly what you know."

The Circassian swallowed the stimulating beverage at one gulp.

"Your enemies, Sire, are innumerable, they

conspire everywhere, in masonic lodges, in the mosks. . . ."

"In the mosks!" cried the Sultan aghast.

"Yes, Sire."

"It is false!" cried Mahmoud. "I have excellent spies among the freemasons, the employés, and the softas."

"Your spies, perhaps without your knowledge, are probably in the service of New-Turkey," replied Hassan coolly; "they are spying in behalf of their own party while receiving pay from you."

"Bey-effendi, do you question my devotion to His Majesty?"

"Hush, Mahmoud, and let him speak!"

"Pardon me, Sire, for going into details," said Hassan-Bey; "they are necessary to prove my assertions, and I entreat His Highness, the grand vizier, not to doubt what I am about to relate."

"Speak, Hassan, we are listening."

"Sire, I was going to-night to the mosk of Chézadé-Bashi for the holy prayer. A throng of believers crowded around the fountains to make their ablutions, and I had to await my turn; although it was nearly night, I noticed distinctly that one of the imaums of the mosk, while apparently *merely inspecting* the fountains touched the arm

of certain Mussulmans who replied by slightly raising the left hand without looking at him. The first time, it did not attract my attention; but when I saw this manœuvre repeated hundreds of times I understood it to be a signal, and when the priest came to my fountain while I seemed busy washing my hands, he touched me gently: I made the gesture I had observed. 'To-night after prayers,' he then said, and I saw him moving away repeating his gesture and words to the other believers.

"I entered the mosk with an oppressed heart. The holy place was full of devout worshippers. The chandeliers bearing only a few tapers cast an uncertain light. With my fez down over my brow and leaning against a pillar, I escaped attention.

"When the prayer was over a few Mussulmans went away but the majority remained. Then the mosk gates were closed, and several softas and mollahs dispersed among the crowd exchanging words which I could not catch; then they ascended the desk whence the Koran is read; but only to desecrate it, for they appealed to religion, not as a law, but as the bulwark of liberty. They preached freedom of the press, of the people, and of customs. 'Abdul-Aziz,' they said, 'must sub-

mit to the will of the country for the future. Turkey's welfare demands it. It is time for her to resume her place among the great European nations. Our provinces lie in three quarters of the world, our agricultural wealth makes us the granary of Europe; our inimitable fabrics furnish her with the most gorgeous ornaments; our possessions stretch along the shores of five seas, and more than thirty races of men acknowledge our rule! Does our holy religion hinder our following the great progress of the age? On the contrary, fellow-believers, it encourages us in it. Why do we keep back? We are rich, and yet our finances are ruined? We are powerful, why is our prestige diminishing? It is because the hand which guides the State is feeble and incapable?'

"Sire, see the audacity of these wretches; they dare to slander their sovereign lord, the head of their religion. I cursed my helplessness while listening to these blasphemous speeches, which were received with frantic hurrahs. Twenty times I was near giving vent to my indignation at the risk of being torn to pieces by these infamous patriots—but I remembered that discretion and coolness might be of more service to Your Majesty than the useless sacrifice of my life. I therefore remained *awaiting the* end of this meeting where I saw

numerous enemies, one especially, the most violent. . . ."

"What is his name?" asked Mahmoud, taking out a memorandum-book in which he set down some notes.

"I cannot tell you his name," said Hassan after some hesitation, "but Your Highness may depend on finding him at the head of the conspirators; when you crush them, you will crush him also."

"What! Hassan, you refuse to name an enemy?" said the minister in a reproachful tone.

"Ah, Your Highness, if he was alone, but there are so many!"

"That's all you had to tell us?" said the Sultan breathless with emotion.

"Yes, Sire. After all these blasphemous speeches were ended, the gates were opened and I was enabled to make my escape. I thought of hastening to the police minister but I preferred speaking to Your Majesty."

"Well, Mahmoud, you see the consequences of your caution and self-confidence!" cried Abdul-Aziz turning upon his minister. "You see how well informed are your spies. We are talking poetry here while they speak treason at Stamboul!"

"Sire," replied the grand-vizier after a few moments silence necessary to collect his ideas, "I have assumed the entire responsibility for the safety of the empire, and I assure Your Majesty that you have nothing to fear so long as I remain in power. Calm yourself, I shall know this very night whether I must punish these fiery young Turks or tolerate them awhile longer. Fear nothing, Sire," repeated Mahmoud, whose wits were sharpened by the dread of losing his office. "Rebellious Herzegovina affords us a good pretext for sending these young hotspurs to the army. We will form battalions of these conspirators; they will die for their country and we shall be rid of them."

"The pasha is right," said the Sultan firmly, addressing Hassan-Bey who stood gloomy and silent.

"Slow-footed revenge is sure to be baffled," said the latter.

"Hassan-Bey is young, fiery, and passionate, like all his countrymen," said the vizier haughtily. "An Arab proverb says: 'Success is the reward of patience,' and I add: To-day's offence must be avenged to-morrow; the blow is more certain."

"It is true that it is impossible to decide on

the spur of the moment," said the Sultan with his habitual indecision.

"I have succeeded in suppressing all my enemies," added Mahmoud with emphasis; "the Russian ambassador[1] said to me only yesterday, when he heard my decision not to pay the May coupons, that I was a profound diplomat. 'Pasha-effendi that is an able stroke of yours,' he said to me. 'Not to pay the consols—that is a splendid idea! I could not have done better myself. You are certainly the savior of Turkey!'"

"That's all very well," said Abdul-Aziz; "but I will none the less order the sentinels to be doubled at the palace gates. Hassan-Bey, you shall be my eldest son's chief aide-de-camp, and tomorrow you shall have the star of the Medjidié—you richly deserve it." And while the Circassian bowed to the ground humbly thanking the Sultan, the latter added mentally:—"I begin to believe that Mihri's forebodings are being realized, and that my destiny is darkened with black clouds."

At the same instant a courier from the minister of war arrived at full speed. The Sultan saw him cross the court-yard like an arrow and throw his horse's reins to an aga. The minister's aide-de-camp was immediately announced, and the

1. Ignatieff was at that time the Russian Ambassador.—Transl.

Sultan ordered him to be ushered in at once, while Hassan turned away to avoid Salaheddin's stern look.

"What news do you bring?" the Sultan asked the messenger.

"A telegram from Dervish-Pasha," said the officer curtly, handing a dispatch to the grand-vizier who delivered it to the Sultan.

"It must be bad news," thought Hassan, "otherwise Salaheddin would not have brought it in person so eagerly."

In fact the Sultan had frowned on reading the telegram which he returned to the vizier, whose countenance instantly darkened. Salaheddin standing motionless near the door cast a glance full of hate upon those gloomy brows.—A smile almost curled his pale lips as the Sultan dismissed him with a sign, saying:

"Very well, effendi, you may go."

He made a low bow and withdrew, leaving the three exalted personages silent and gloomy.

"This is the first satisfaction they have afforded me," muttered Salaheddin going down the palace steps; "but Allah is great! it will not be the last!"

When he had disappeared, Hassan, who had *stood looking* out of a window, turned to read

the dispatch sent by Dervish-Pasha, commander-in-chief of the army: the telegram contained these three lines:

"MOSTAR, April 15, '76 (private).

"Surrounded by the insurgent forces, I retreat after having lost 600 men and 8 guns; enemy's loss trifling. Send reinforcements, money, and supplies. DERVISH."

"Dervish-Pasha calls for reinforcements," cried Mahmoud. "He shall have them; we will send him the *élite* of New-Turkey, and we will see if they can fight as well as they talk politics."

The next day Dervish-Pasha's dispatch was published in all the papers and posted up in every street; only it had been slightly altered, as the reader may observe. It now read as follows:

"MOSTAR, April 15, '76.

"Battle gained over the insurgents who are retreating in disorder after enormous losses; we lost only six men and captured abundant supplies.

DERVISH."

On reading the news of this victory, the credulous Mussulmans shouted: "Long live the Sul-

tan!" and the unbelieving rayas[1] said: "Victory is ours, and the consols have fallen still lower."

This is what is conventionally called accurate information from the seat of war.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BEGINNING OF A REVOLUTION.

WHILE the mobilization of the army was going on and the provinces were sending their contingents of recruits to the capital to reinforce the forces opposed to the insurgents of Bosnia and Herzegovina, public meetings were going on during the evening in Stamboul and continued late into the night: the conspirators now scorned secrecy and silence. The discussions were held aloud and in the open mosk. The Christians were alarmed at these war-like demonstrations so contrary to Turkish habits, and feared that the discontent caused by the Christian insurrection of Herzegovina would have disastrous results for them. The quarters and villages inhabited by the rayas wore an air of sombre disquietude. They kept watch

1. *Rayas, i.e.*, Christian subjects of the Porte.—*Transl.*

during the night, purchased arms, and planned means of defense; the women prepared for flight. Meanwhile the softas[1] and the young men of the party of malcontents endeavored to quiet the fears of the Christians by assuring them that they had no ill-will against them or the Sultan, but only against the ministry.

The ambassadors, as much alarmed as their countrymen, repaired daily to the Sublime Porte to demand explanations about these gatherings—which seemed to bode no good at a time when war was going on against Christians. But, excepting the grand vizier who was beginning to tremble, the ministers replied like the softas to the rayas: "Fear nothing; the conspiracy does not threaten you, it is solely against the government." But these tranquillizing words had no effect in calming the Europeans, and about the beginning of May they began leaving in crowds.

Mahmoud-Pasha was threatened; the people were weary of him and of the sheikh-ul-Islam. The ministers, anxious to avoid a revolution which they felt to be impending, implored the Sultan to dismiss his favorite. But Mahmoud's warning: "Don't put yourself in your enemies' hands," and his

1. Softas, *i.e.*, Students of Moslem theology.—*Transl.*

repeated assurances that his presence alone could save the State and the Sultan, made the latter more obstinate than ever in confiding unlimited power to his vizier.

Perhaps Mahmoud-Pasha would have been less imperturbable in the midst of this popular storm if he had not been advised and encouraged by the Russian ambassador, who felt himself on the brink of losing the fruit of ten years of secret intrigues and patient affability. The Turkish empire had been undermined by insurrections. Nothing was lacking but a trifling Mussulman revolt; a massacre of Christians was desirable, anything that would afford Russia a favorable occasion as the friend and protector of religion to take arms in behalf of her fellow Christians, and on this plea, justifiable in the eyes of Europe, to avenge after a lapse of thirty years a defeat which galled her pride. It was known in Greek circles that *the friend* was armed, ready to come and plant her flag—if nothing prevented—upon the dome of St. Sophia.

All these plots concocted in Northern Turkey were about to be baffled by the Turkish conspirators who threatened to rescue and redeem the Turkish empire by the adoption of a new policy. *It was therefore* of vital interest to Russia to keep

this revolution from breaking out until the hatred against Christians had sundered all bonds of friendship and interest. There existed at that time (May 1876) in Constantinople two very distinct parties: on one side Russia, the Christians, Mahmoud-Pasha and his partisans; on the other, the malcontents of New Turkey, some ministers of genius (Midhat-Pasha, Hussein-Avni-Pasha, Rédif-Pasha) who had but one object:—that of keeping Turkey from falling into the abyss towards which a bad government was dragging her. No one could foresee the end of this situation which was daily becoming more intolerable. False rumors, impossible telegrams involving continual contradictions, bewildered the public, increased confusion, paralyzed trade and brought despair to the Levantine merchants whose business was completely stopped.

One day however, the 7th of May, a terrible piece of news, unfortunately too true, plunged the capital into consternation: it was the murder of the French and Prussian consuls at Salonica—a fearful massacre which the Turkish government had encouraged or at least tolerated. The cause of this terrible event was as follows: A Bulgarian woman who had been converted to Mohammedanism, becoming disgusted with harem life, had re-

turned to Salonica to claim the Russian consul's protection. The hour of her arrival being known, a number of Greeks as well as some Turkish soldiers awaited her at the station. When she arrived, wearing the Turkish costume with face-veil and feradjé, some zaptiehs (police officers) attempted to take her to the Mollah's house where she was to lay aside the Mussulman dress; the Greeks tore her from the guards and escorted her to the house of a Bulgarian relative who was consul both for America and Russia. In the conflict between the Bulgarians and Turks several were wounded, and the city of Salonica was convulsed by this unprecedented event. The next day much excitement prevailed among the Mussulmans; they claimed the Bulgarian woman, saying that so long as she wore the Moslem dress she should not stay under a Christian's roof.

The French and Prussian consuls, both young men of good family and brothers-in-law, thought that their presence and soothing words would pacify the malcontents assembled in the mosk Yeni-Djami. They took with them the governor of Salonica and entered the mosk with him; but the appearance of the consuls instead of calming the insurgents increased their rage, and despite *the governor's* presence, the unfortunate consuls

were beaten to death with iron bars torn from the mosk windows by the furious fanatics.

A few days after the Salonica massacre, a deputation of several thousand softas repaired to the mosk of Beshik-Tash, hoping that the Sultan would come to the Friday prayer; they wished to present a petition to him, but the throng of students waited in vain. Abdul-Aziz feared for his life; he had heard of the crowds assembled around the mosk, and he did not leave the palace. Now, it was without a precedent in the annals of the Ottoman dynasty that a Padishah, the Head of religion, the holy Prophet's representative, should be absent from the solemn Friday prayer. To excuse this breach of Moslem custom it was reported that the Sultan was ill; but the truth was that Abdul-Aziz, trembling and concealed behind the silken blinds of the harem windows, was vainly seeking the solution of the problem, so difficult for kings and so new to a Sultan, viz: how to suppress a revolution.

The softas did not give it up. The next day they went about through the European quarters of Pera and Galata, in groups of two or three, entering the gunsmiths' shops and purchasing revolvers. Whenever a new customer entered a gun-store, a throng of curious and anxious Chris-

tians crowded before the shop-windows, and the alarmists asserted that before long the Christians would experience the fatal accuracy of these dangerous purchases. During that day a large quantity of arms was sold at fabulous prices, and the following night few persons slept soundly in Pera. Many ambassadors took the precaution of sending their baggage on board the European men-of-war with orders to fire up at the first shot, but the night passed quietly; only the begtchi (night-watch) broke the silence by striking his iron-shod staff upon the stone pavements. The inhabitants of the imperial palace slept still worse than those of Pera, and the guard at the harem gates was doubled.

Day broke at last, and Constantinople resumed its smiling animated aspect. About ten o'clock, the same deputation of softas arrived from Stamboul through Galata; but they did not stop there, to the great relief of the Christians, and kept on to Dolma-Batché.

The softas halted in front of the lofty and majestic gate which faces the mosk. An aide of the Sultan's eldest son came to inquire what they wanted.

"We wish to speak to the Sultan!" cried the *students with* one voice.

"His Majesty is in the harem, somewhat ailing. He desires his faithful subjects to explain to me their wishes, and I will promptly submit them to His Highness."

"We don't want you, Hassan-Bey," was the reply; "we wish to see His Majesty Abdul-Aziz."

"The Sultan cannot see you on account of his health," answered Hassan firmly. "What do you want?"

"We demand the dismissal of the grand-vizier and the sheikh-ul-Islam!" they cried fiercely.

"I will inform His Majesty of your desires, and ask his orders," replied Hassan, and saluting the deputation he reëntered the palace.

The softas waited patiently; coolness and strength of will go hand-in-hand.

Hassan returned in a quarter of an hour. "Effendis!" he said with a forced smile, "His Majesty is touched with the confidence you show him; the wish of so many citizens is not expressed in vain, and His Highness has always lent an attentive ear to the nation's desires. Go to the Sublime Porte, the firman will follow you there."

The softas, who had had little hope of seeing their request so promptly granted, enthusiastically cheered the Sultan, and full of hope returned to Stamboul.

In the meantime, as may well be supposed, there was much agitation in the imperial harem. If Abdul-Aziz was not ill, he was certainly very much demoralized. He strode up and down one of the Queen Mother's salons, sometimes stamping with rage, frowning, and again throwing himself despairingly on a sofa.

The Sultana-Validé and Mihri tried to strengthen the Sultan's vacillating mind by their advice.

"No, you cannot grant these madmen's demands," cried the Queen Mother angrily. "Don't permit yourself to be intimidated. Be firm; all your predecessors have been so, your weakness will prove your ruin."

"Every one tells me my obstinacy will cause my downfall."

"Don't listen to the advice of the foes of your dynasty," said Mihri earnestly. "Should an enemy's counsel ever be followed?"

"Mahmoud-Pasha is your most faithful minister," resumed the other Sultana; "what will you do without him?"

"Well, well! I cannot lose my throne for the sake of my vizier! Civil war threatens us; and you women, do you know what that is? There are *times when a* sovereign must pretend for a few

days to obey his people's will, and that hour has come for me."

"Hassan-Bey humbly requests Your Majesty's reply," said a eunuch entering with a low bow.

"Tell him my firman will be sent to the Sublime Porte within an hour!"

In fact, notwithstanding the Sultanas' strong opposition, Abdul-Aziz kept his word this time. The softas had not long to wait. A palace chamberlain arrived and announced to the ministers that the seals of the State were entrusted to Mehemet-Rushti, and that the chief of religion was replaced by Haïri-Oullah-Effendi, a Turk of great intellect and a strong partisan of Mussulman civilization.

This news was received with repeated shouts of: "Yasha Padishah, Yasha tchok yasha! (Long live the Sultan!) and the new vizier, immediately informed of the Sultan's high favor, at once went to pay homage to his sovereign, escorted by all the softas who conducted him in triumph to the palace of Dolma-Batché.

Fear is a very bad adviser; Abdul-Aziz did not condescend to receive the thanks of these thousands of students, the hope and future of the country, and gave audience only to Mehemet-Rushti, who easily read in the Sultan's altered

countenance that his appointment was against His Majesty's desire and was forced upon him by circumstances; therefore, both vizier and softas who had come full of joy and gratitude to the imperial palace, returned sad and dejected.

On entering Stamboul, the softas passed through a street almost entirely occupied by Christian shop-keepers. They walked rapidly, wearied and oppressed by the emotions of such an eventful day. The small Greek and Armenian tradesmen who were loitering and watching at their shop-doors were alarmed at suddenly seeing the crowd of students moving swiftly along, covered with dust and perspiration, and their eyes angered by disappointment; they believed that this band of fanatics had just murdered their co-religionists at Galata and were coming to slaughter them too. So, on the appearance of the softas rushing into the street, a sudden and general stampede took place. The Christians closed their stores and fled into the neighboring khans (large warehouses) which they barricaded, and where they came near being suffocated by the pressure of the terrified multitudes who sought refuge there. On their side, the softas did not at first understand the meaning of this flight; and by unconsciously increasing their speed added to the terror of the

poor rayas; finally perceiving the Christians' error, they smiled with contemptuous pity and pursued their way, leaving the merchants somewhat ashamed and very much disturbed by their panic.

Abdul-Aziz believed he had satisfied his people by yielding to the softas' requests and gave himself no further trouble to reform his system of government. All Mahmoud's appointees remained in power; the vizier had been overthrown, but his party remained. Now, it was this very party that New-Turkey had hoped to crush, and found still unshaken in spite of all its efforts.

Moreover, the Sultan was continually demanding money from his new vizier, who, having barely enough to pay the army and meet the expenses of the war, was unable to satisfy his sovereign. The latter wished to give a right royal wedding to one of his sisters and to purchase new jewelry and silver-plate for all the women of his harem. Mehemet Rushti's refusal greatly displeased the Sultan; a pasha who dared make remonstrances about the expenses of the palace was little short of an insolent rebel.

The sovereign's disappointment vented itself in insulting words to the vizier. Mehemet-Rushti went to the cabinet-council and announced that he

had resolved to resign his office; but his colleagues and the New-Turkey party implored him to remain at his post, for they feared civil war would break out upon a new change of vizier. Hoping to bring the obstinate monarch to more reasonable views, the ministers and the vizier on the 29th of May repaired to Dolma-Batché palace.

His Majesty had risen in a bad humor that day. Mihri-Sultana had had a frightful night; she had been disturbed by continual and terrible nightmare, and her royal husband seemed to have suffered from the same influence. When the grand-vizier Rushti-Pasha, Rédif-Pasha, and Hussein-Avni-Pasha, the minister of war, entered the salon they found the Sultan, his eyes sunken, his lips compressed, seated in a large arm-chair, toying nervously with a chaplet of amber beads which he occasionally struck on the arm of the chair. The ministers bowed three times in succession down to the ground according to court etiquette, and remained standing, with folded arms, humble mien and bowed backs at ten paces' distance from their master. Abdul-Aziz never moved on perceiving them; only his lips contracted scornfully in a sardonic grin. Some agas brought seats to the ministers, who sat down modestly on the edge of the chairs and waited to be questioned.

"What news from the army?" asked the Sultan roughly turning to the minister of war.

"Sire, responded the seraskier, your soldiers exhibit matchless valor and their commanders great sagacity; but Herzegovina is an impregnable country. It is necessary to fight against ambuscades, among the rocks, in narrow passes commanded by the enemy, and our brave soldiers meet death without even seeing whence it comes."

"Dogs of giaours!"

"Oh, that I could exterminate them all," said Hussein-Avni bitterly; "they are the sole cause of all our disasters."

"And what other disaster beside war have we to dread?" asked Abdul-Aziz proudly.

The grand-vizier, to whom this question was addressed, cast an astonished look at the Sultan.

"What Sire! do you not know? Our finances are the poorest in Europe, our credit is compromised, our commerce is languishing, and poverty. . . ."

"You remind me of it," interrupted Abdul-Aziz. "I find myself in great straits since they stopped paying interest on the public debt. Don't you expect money this week, my dear vizier?"

"Yes, Sire," replied the poor pasha with hesitation. "I expect the tribute from the villayets

of Angora and Aïden which are the most important in the empire."

"I hope that out of that money you will surely pay me my coupons — 18,000 Turkish pounds — a mere trifle. Any how, when Mahmoud concluded the financial treaty which reduced the interest, he assured me that I should always continue to be paid in full."

Rushti-Pasha was almost beside himself, but he restrained his feelings.

"Your Majesty this is a very paltry sum indeed for an august Sultan; but this is a very difficult moment. I expect £60,000 and I have to pay 600,000. I am obliged to dispatch this money to Herzegovina, where our troops are in want of everything...."

"Vizier, I need money!"

"Sire, I understand Your Majesty.... but the army is starving, our wounded are perishing for want of supplies, we have not yet been able to send ambulances...."

"These details are nothing but pretexts, and your predecessor would never have dared make such objections."

"Believe me, I am in despair at being unable to obey Your Majesty's wishes; but at this time *when the* people are discontented, it might be

best perhaps to first supply the wants of the army. . . ."

"Oh! as to that," answered the Sultan haughtily, "the complaints of the people never troubled the ex-vizier; a few prominent heads struck off are an unfailing remedy for popular agitation."

"Formerly it was the custom; now, it is impossible," murmured Rédif-Pasha.

"Impossible! since when have I lost the power of life and death over my subjects?"

"Since Europe has counted us among the number of civilized nations, Your Majesty!"

"Wallah! (By God!) your words have the ring of the New-Turkish faction indeed!"

Rédif bit his lips.

"Sire," continued Hussein-Avni after having consulted his colleagues with a glance, "we have come to-day for a very important matter. . . ."

"Civil war is about to break out," interrupted the grand-vizier; "more than twenty thousand Mussulmans only await the favorable moment to deluge Stamboul with blood, unless they obtain their demands."

"Again! what more do they require of me?" roared the Sultan, rising in his arm-chair and grinding in his hand the amber chaplet which

broke, the beads scattering over the Smyrna carpet.

Seeing the monarch's threatening air the grand-vizier hesitated, but Rédif-Pasha, braving the storm which he saw ready to burst, said in a cold firm tone:

"The people *demand* the dismissal of the governors, mutessarifs (prefects), and employés named in this list."

And drawing a long memorandum from his breast, he respectfully presented it to His Majesty.

Abdul-Aziz scanned with a feverish glance the names of all Mahmoud-Pasha's faithful protégés—of all those in fact whom the Sultan considered as the only support of his dynasty.

"That is all, is it?" he asked ironically folding up the paper.

"Yes, Sire."

"Well then! the Mussulmans shall not have their way this time; they have indeed become accustomed to being obeyed too promptly. Not one of the employés here inscribed shall be discharged; *not one*, you hear?"

The ministers looked at each other pale and dismayed.

"*Yes,*" said Abdul-Aziz rising; "I will keep

this document which contains the names of the faithful subjects who alone are still the honor and glory of my empire. Truly the people are demented. They want me to sacrifice my friends and give them my truest supporters as their prey? No, no," continued the Sultan, "I will never do it—never!"

And exhausted by his vehemence he fell back in his arm-chair.

"Your Majesty," cried Hussein-Avni, with clasped hands, "these removals are necessary for the safety of the empire. See, Sire, in what a wretched situation we are! our enemies will some day profit by the advantage we give them by losing time in continual quarrels instead of thinking of defending ourselves."

"More than all," added the vizier, "this *coup-d'état* will mark the era of a new departure, an efficient and wise policy."

"Necessary for the salvation of the country," added Rédif.

"Go on Pashas-effendis!" shouted the Sultan in loud and angry tones.—"Go on, the Sultan is listening to your advice; he is waiting until you have finished giving him orders. Wallah! do you believe that my patience is inexhaustible? that I will bear being dictated to by you?"

"Sire, pardon us, we speak for the welfare of the empire. . . . "

"The empire is mine! I alone have the right to know what it needs. It is you who have sowed discord in order to grasp power. I no longer need look for the authors of our woes; your ambition has dropped the mask—*you* put the people forward: you say the people *demand*. When did a Sultan ever obey his subjects' orders?"

"Times have changed, Sire; this is a critical situation."

"Yes it is critical because my eyes were not yet open; this list gives me the key of all the plots; your friends want to be appointed in the place of mine—but no, you shall not have this satisfaction. Mahmoud will resume the guidance of the empire, Mahmoud who is afraid of nothing."

The three ministers rose, hardly bridling their wrath. The Sultan rose also, and in a thundering voice which was heard in the adjoining apartments filled with aides-de-camp shouted:

"Hence, traitors! and never reappear in my presence, if you value your lives!"

And with an imperious gesture he dismissed the ministers, who backed slowly out of his *presence.*

CHAPTER XIV.

MOURAD.

THE Sultan's anger was destined to bear deadly fruit. On leaving Dolma-Batché, the three ministers, still quivering with rage and humiliation, presented themselves at the grand council where their colleagues were waiting for the result of the imperial audience; but when they learned the Sultan's intentions, every one exclaimed against this abuse of power. For some time past there had been vague suggestions of dethroning Abdul-Aziz; but the sheikh-ul-Islam, Mehemet-Rushti, and Hussein-Avni had all opposed this breach of Mussulman rules and customs. Death alone could open Mourad's way to the throne; yet no one had ventured to propose Abdul-Aziz's death. The council of ministers, after four hours' discussion, decided upon sending two questions to Haïri-Effendi, the sheikh-ul-Islam, without whose signature, according to law, the sovereign's dethronement could not be decreed. These two

questions signed by all the ministers and borne by a confidential aide-de-camp were as follows:

"When a Sultan becomes unable to govern his empire in consequence of intellectual deficiency, is it lawful to depose him?

"When a Sultan wastes the finances of the country and ruins the people to provide for his pleasures, is it lawful to depose him?"

The ministers anxiously awaited Haïri-Oullah's reply, which was brief. It was written as follows, just below the two questions:

"Bismillah (in Allah's name), May 29, 1293 of the hegira.

"Yes, a Sultan may be lawfully deposed if he ruins his country by his obstinacy and his insane prodigality, for a Sultan should be the father of his people and not their tyrant.

"Allah forgive him! He is great and merciful.

Signed: HAÏRI-OULLAH."

The moment this document, emanating from the chief of religion, was in the ministers hands, they gave the orders necessary for the success of the *coup-d'état* they had planned, and which the least imprudence might wreck at the cost of thousands of heads.

Dispatches were flying with incredible rapidity, for it was resolved that the next day, May 30th, at noon, the Sultan was to be deposed, and that Mourad was to succeed him. Celerity and discretion alone could insure success, for which the conspirators hardly dared hope.

Salaheddin-Bey, who was aide-de-camp to the minister of war (for after Aïsha's death he had resigned his place), had again taken service under Hussein-Avni solely because he knew him to be the chief of a conspiracy against Abdul-Aziz; he had now become the most zealous and the rashest of the conspirators. Since death seemed to him the sweetest prospect next to revenge, he greedily courted peril and sought the most dangerous missions with eager joy. Hussein-Avni knew his young aide-de-camp's motive, and afforded him every opportunity to show his fidelity and courage.

Salaheddin was present at the cabinet meeting. He followed with ardent interest the discussions which took place concerning Abdul-Aziz's downfall. Finally he was charged with bearing to Mourad the news of his approaching elevation. This dangerous mission was full of charms for him. For seven years he had watched this political movement whose every step had been counted by

the wild pulsations of his impatient heart; to wait seven years for the downfall of a dynasty which seemed unassailable, and then all at once to be on the eve of success! It was almost too much joy for this unhappy man; his dream of vengeance was at last about to be realized. Yet despite the turmoil of his heart he must appear calm; his bearing was perfectly quiet when he presented himself at Pera to Mourad's tailor. He had hit upon a pretext to reach the prince, and asked in the most natural manner if the last dress ordered by Mourad had been sent him.

"Effendi, the coat is only basted," said the tailor; "His Highness was to order some others and we did not hurry with this one."

"No matter," said Salaheddin, who had found out what he wanted; "so it is ready for Friday. . ."

"Oh, effendi, it will be ready even before."

"His Highness wants some samples with the prices of your summer suits; can you let me have some?"

"Certainly, effendi," and the tailor hastened to procure the patterns, supposing Salaheddin to be one of the prince's agas, for the aide had taken care to change his costume and to hide half his face under a large fez which came over his eyes.

Having the samples and some of the tailor's

cards in his pocket, Salaheddin went to Tchéragan, to a little pavilion built for Mourad by his uncle the Sultan, who always kept him in sight.

The year 1870 is not yet so remote as to make us forget the sensation produced by Egypt and the viceroy's triumph on the occasion of the opening of the Suez Canal. Profiting by the admiration and indulgence of Europe, the enthusiasm of his subjects and the continued indulgence of his liege lord the Sultan, Ismaïl-Pasha set aside the prejudices of the Moslem religion which prescribes that the eldest male of the family shall succeed to the throne, to adopt the hereditary law of Christian monarchies; he declared his eldest son his heir, thus, dispossessing his brother Mustapha Fazil-Pasha of his rights as heir presumptive.

This news created a great sensation in Europe. People said: "Look, the viceroy adopts our laws! He is certainly a great man, a truly liberal-minded sovereign!" But in Turkey, though the news caused a still deeper impression, it was quite the reverse of favorable. "Ismaïl-Pasha breaks the holy customs; the head of the State gives a pernicious example!" they cried with one voice. What was not the credulous Mussulmans' amazement when they learned that Sultan Abdul-Aziz had congratulated his vassal, and that he also

desired to proclaim heir-apparent his son Yussouf-Izzetdin, now ten years old, to the prejudice of Prince Mourad, the eldest son of the late Sultan Abdul-Mejid.

The court, the diplomatic corps, and the government journals alone applauded this act; the people remained mute, an unmistakable mark of discontent, for if they have no right to disapprove the Sultan's decrees, they are at least free to withhold their applause. The interest which attaches to the victims of injustice concentrated upon Mourad, the hope of the malcontents; and the latter increasing every day, the prince became the more popular because of his being dispossessed.

The freedom Abdul-Aziz had granted his nephews up to the time of his departure for Europe ceased immediately upon his return. It appears that His Majesty had been vexed at observing the reception and honors bestowed by foreign courts upon Abdul-Mejid's sons, and he determined to keep them secluded from the world to the extent of his power.

Mourad owned a fine estate on the Island of Prinkipo in the Marmora, ten miles from Constantinople, where he liked to spend the summer. It *was a thoroughly* European village where he lived

more like a private gentleman than a prince of the blood, imitating in this all the heirs to the Sultans' throne, whose unpretending style of living is in such marked contrast to the splendor of their future. Mourad unceremoniously visited his Greek neighbors, practising music with them and charming them with his distinguished and affable manners.

As soon as Prince Yussouf-Izzetdin's heirship was contemplated, Mourad was forbidden to go hereafter to the islands. The only country-seat left him was the little kiosk of Haïdar-bashi, situated on a desert-plain, between the immense cemetery of Scutari and the half-finished railway. The circle of the prince's friends was narrowed to the smallest number, or rather he was not allowed to have any except those of his uncle the Sultan.

Mourad's aides-de-camp who were all devoted to his party, were replaced by His Majesty's servants who rendered the sovereign a minute account of the young prince's every action. Mourad was passionately fond of music and the Italian language and he had a professor who taught him both; but Dante's poetical flights and Rossini's music were now considered dangerous; professor, books, and opera-scores were taken away from him.

Deprived of his friends and amusements, the prince gradually lost his confiding and amiable disposition. A nervousness born of fear, a sadness caused by solitude took its place. Character is often only the result of education and surroundings—it improves or deteriorates according to the circumstances of life. Mourad saw his youth slipping away in disappointment. Placed by destiny on the steps of the throne, a Sultan's son, his life was spent in captivity and espionage; could anything be more humiliating than to feel himself watched by false courtiers who spied out his most secret thoughts?

Since the agitation and plots of the reform party in Stamboul, the poor prisoner's existence had become more and more intolerable; so much so that he began to curse his partisans for thinking so much about saving the country and so little about his hopeless life.

On Monday, the 29th of May, Mourad was spending the day as usual, playing *tavli* (backgammon) with one of the eunuchs of his harem; he threw the dice absently and wearily, often forgetting to make his points and thinking of anything but the play. Two mollahs sitting cross-legged on the broad divans were smoking their *long chibooks*, avoiding all allusion to politics

before the prince who was entirely ignorant of the plots brewing around the Sultan's palace.

While playing mechanically, Mourad's attention was aroused by a confused and increasing noise; a loud squabble was going on in the antechamber. A voice reached him whose tones made him turn pale. Luckily the mollahs had also noticed the noise, and their eyes being turned towards the door they did not perceive the prince's emotion.

"Mollah-effendi, please go see what is the matter," said Mourad trying to speak calmly: "I think they are quarrelling out there."

"Never mind, Your Highness, it is only some slave your blacks are putting out."

"Well then, can't you find out what it is?" he said impatiently looking at his eunuch.

The latter understood his master's desire and rose to enquire the cause of the disturbance. After a few minutes he came back laughing, followed by a fellow in Armenian dress who awkwardly saluted the mollahs first and the prince afterwards.

"Emasjian, Your Highness's tailor," said the eunuch, "had come to measure you for a suit and bring you some samples; but the agas would not

let in the poor devil who gesticulated and brayed like a jackass."

The mollahs laughed, but the prince frowned.

"I shall soon be forbidden even to order my own clothes," he murmured sitting down angrily upon the divan. "Show me the samples," he said to the eunuch.

But the officious tailor bustled forward and presented them himself to the prince; their eyes met. Mourad recognized Salaheddin but made no sign, and silently taking the samples, he rose and went to the window as if to have a better light to examine the stuffs, but in reality to read a brief note hidden under them. This message, as may be imagined, was a notice from the ministers announcing Mourad's coronation for the morrow.

This unforeseen news so completely upset the young prince that he leaned fainting upon the window-sill. Salaheddin turned to the eunuch whom he knew to be devoted to his master, and made sign to him to draw away the two mollahs. The black needed no further hint, and with ludicrous playfulness he began to extol to the mollahs the merits of a fine watermelon which had just arrived, and finally took them away with him to try this delicious morsel.

Hardly had they left the chamber when Salah-

eddin, throwing back his fez, rushed up to the prince.

"Dear Salaheddin-Bey!—it is you who bring me this welcome news! Blessings on you! my deliverance is near, then! Allah and my friends have heard me!"

"Yes, Your Highness, to-morrow will be a great day—a day of vengeance for us all!"

"And you also shall be avenged! Ah! my poor friend, I have learned all your misfortunes... you who are so silent! I know what you have suffered. The groan of every sorrow reaches me, but, alas! I fail to catch even the echo of any joys."

Salaheddin bent his brow under the weight of his sad thoughts; but knowing the value of every moment:

"Prince," he said, "be happy! Think no more of my sorrows; I no longer count among the living. I represent Azraël, the angel of death and of vengeance. But you, Your Highness, will enjoy long years of happiness. The future smiles upon you. A past full of trials and tears often resembles a summer rain, which the sun soon dries up. Henceforth you shall be free. Allah grant that you may wisely use your freedom and your power!"

"Don't speak thus, Salaheddin-, I feel," he

added in a low tone, "as if I were going mad. And the Sultan, what will be done with him?"

"He will be deposed and exiled."

"No, he must not be exiled; above all spare his life, I implore you. I will not have a throne stained with blood or wet with tears. I pardon all the harm he has done me—let all know this."

Mourad could say no more, for the two mollahs came back with the eunuch.—Salaheddin had only time to pull his fez over his eyes as he backed towards the door, saying with a very marked Armenian accent: "Your Highness shall be waited on to-morrow at the latest; everything will be done to please you."

This reply satisfied Mourad who, unable to hide his feelings or restrain his emotion any longer withdrew into the harem; there at least he could give way to his joy and thank Allah who had broken his chains after sixteen years of bondage.

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE TOILS.

EVERYTHING seemed quiet in Stamboul excepting some couriers who dashed about in various directions; but as these messengers are frequently seen galloping at full speed to carry a flower to a Sultana or a message from the ministers, no one took heed of them. Nevertheless orders and counter-orders were flying about. Two large transport-steamers anchored inside the Golden Horn received at 8 o'clock at night orders to fire up and be in readiness for departure; a sealed dispatch was given to the commander with orders to open it only when twenty miles out at sea on the Marmora. The sun had hardly set, gilding with its rays the glancing waves and the Asiatic coast, when night came down in full darkness: the brief Eastern twilight seemed shortened that evening, as if the sky had sided with the conspirators.

A secret order from the minister of war was sent to the general of the imperial guard, com-

manding him to repair with his troops in marching order to the arsenal. Pontoons conveyed officers and soldiers on board the two transports without any further explanations. Silence and caution were enjoined by the minister. The general, unsuspicious of such audacity on the part of the seraskier, thought he was carrying out His Majesty's orders. At ten o'clock the drawbridges which close the Golden Horn were opened, and the transports steamed out of the port.

The removal of the imperial guard was the first success of the conspirators, for it was known that all the officers of the guards were devoted body and soul to Abdul-Aziz and would have sacrificed their lives in their master's defense. But how could they suspect a plot contrived with so much promptness and audacity? That night, more than two thousand heads risked falling under the headsman's sabre. One single word, one moment of imprudence, and they were lost.

Abdul-Aziz was still under the painful impression of the morning scene. Near him was Mihri, continually repeating that each moment of weakness on his part brought him nearer to ruin; His Majesty was unable to sleep.

Mihri was dozing, but the Sultan was striding *up and down* the apartment, thinking of the

strong measures he intended taking the next morning.

"Yes," he muttered, "a terrible example is needed; I will imitate my father,[1] who in one night massacred five hundred janizaries. A Sultan must assert his power; Mihri is right; to give way is ruin."

At that moment the noise made by a large side-wheel steamer attracted Abdul-Aziz's attention. What ship could be going out at this hour? The loud noise she made could not be that of a merchant vessel, and besides they are forbidden to move during the night. What could it mean? In other circumstances the Sultan would not have troubled himself about so small a matter, but his sleeplessness made him suspicious. He opened the window. What was his astonishment at recognizing the two transports which should have been at anchor inside of the Golden Horn! He could hardly believe his eyes, for he had given no orders for these vessels to go out. A suspicion of treason flashed through his mind. He leaned out and, despite the darkness, he distinguished confused masses of soldiers whose scarlet caps were dimly visible in the rays of the ship's forward lights.

1. The Sultan Mahmoud.

"Allah!" cried Abdul-Aziz, "how come my troops to leave Constantinople without my order! Ah! Hussein, you betray me no doubt! but I swear by Mohammed that you shall not see to-morrow's sunset!"

And in his wrath the Sultan rushed out of the room to his aides-de-camp's quarters and in a furious tone ordered the minister of war to be sent for at once.

An orderly officer immediately leaped upon one of the horses that always stood saddled in the palace yard, and galloped at full speed to the seraskierate. Hussein-Avni and two other ministers were there congratulating each other upon the success which seemed to crown their audacious schemes. The arrival of the Sultan's orderly changed their confidence into terror, and the seraskier, having assured the aide-de-camp that he would follow him at once to the palace, instantly summoned the leaders of the conspiracy.

"We are lost, effendis," said the minister vainly trying to speak firmly, "unless we take energetic measures to ensure the success of our plot which the Sultan has just discovered. No doubt a traitor has sold us. . . ."

Loud exclamations interrupted the seraskier, *who went on:*

"How are we to explain the Sultan's sudden wrath and his express order to go at once to the palace, when this morning he forbade my ever entering it again? The aide, who brought the order, was himself disturbed by the terrible air with which the Sultan commanded him to summon me. The words treason, conspiracies, punishments dropped from his lips. Effendis, the moments are precious. A wise and energetic course alone can save our heads, which certainly will not be on our shoulders to-morrow if I guess correctly our sovereign's purpose."

It was a solemn and terrible moment for the bewildered conspirators who vainly sought some means of escape from so critical a situation. Suddenly one of them stepped forward; it was Midhat-Pasha.

"We must not hesitate a moment, effendis, between our country's salvation and the Sultan's caprices. Half the game is already won; we can yet save everything, it depends only on the boldness of a few men."

A thrill passed through the assemblage and every hand was raised in approval.

"Speak! speak!" they cried.

"The plot fixed for to-morrow must be executed *this very* night, this moment. You hear the

muezzin chanting the last prayer? . . . Before he calls the morning prayer at daylight, Abdul-Aziz must have ceased to reign."

These words were received with general assent. "What must be done to accomplish this result?" asked Hussein-Avni, reading anxiety in every conspirator's face and determination and obedience in their attitude.

"It is a bold step," resumed Midhat, "but our country's safety depends upon it. Each one of you shall have his part in the audacious conspiracy; such a part as befits your courage and your determination to deliver Turkey from a tyrant."

Having spoken these words, the great statesman promptly arranged with the other ministers the orders to be given.

Hussein-Avni was charged with rousing Prince Mourad and bringing him to the seraskierate with a detachment of infantry; the Greek and Armenian patriarchs were to furnish a contingent of rayas who would unite with the numerous conspirators in hailing the new Sultan; the sheikh-ul-Islam and the other ministers would be present at the reading of the imperial *haat* (decree). Rédif-Pasha, in the meantime, was to go to the barracks at Dolma-Batché, put in close arrest in the seras-

kier's name the general and officers on duty, and transfer the command of the battalion to Salaheddin, who had orders to surround the imperial palace. The minister of the navy was to take similar measures with the iron-clads at anchor in front of Dolma-Batché; the officers on duty were to be relieved by conspirators.

The quarter to twelve was striking from the Christian churches, when Rédif-Pasha and Salaheddin-Bey, accompanied by some thirty conspirators, entered the Dolma-Batché barracks. Seeing the minister of war's aide-de-camp and the rest, the officers on guard promptly turned out to salute them; then the pasha with matchless coolness exhibited the seraskier's order; the general in command who had already gone to bed, hardly realized that four sentinels taken from Salaheddin's followers had just been stationed at his door. The officers on duty were relieved by the minister of war's aides, and Salaheddin took command of the battalion which he at once ordered out under arms. Ten minutes later the troops were drawn up in the court-yard, wondering at being roused from their first sleep.

Salaheddin, revolver in hand, took a lantern, and followed by some officers armed like himself, passed in review one by one the faces of all the

soldiers, who failed to comprehend the object of this inspection whose purpose was to find out if any spy had slipped into the ranks. But the young officer was satisfied with his examination; he found only soldiers and no spies.

"You see these revolvers," said Salaheddin addressing the soldiers and pointing to the weapons worn by himself and his companions. "The first who speaks a word is a dead man—the order is silence; the country demands it."

The soldiers bent their heads in token of obedience. Rédif-Pasha marched at their head, his drawn sword in one hand and a revolver in the other, his soldiers, the instruments of his vengeance, gliding stealthily like shadows. The detachment headed by Rédif and Salaheddin followed the road which leads from the barracks to the palace of Dolma-Batché. Every one seemed asleep there; not a gleam of light appeared at the windows of the imperial harem. Rédif marched steadily on and soon came to the gate of the main entrance. The sentry was about to challenge, but one of the officers clapped a pistol at his throat and whispered the countersign in his ear. The sentry was instantly relieved, placed in the centre of the battalion, and informed in a whisper of the order to keep silence. The same manœuvre was repeated without hin-

drance at the three palace gates; one of them then opened and the soldiers were immediately stationed in closed ranks all around the palace, shutting off all egress. It is true the troops at that moment were not aware of the plot they were aiding; they thought they were carrying out the Sultan's orders.

Salaheddin took the most dangerous post; he stationed himself with a few soldiers at the harem gate opening upon the sea; once there, he leaned upon his drawn sword, and raising his eyes towards the palace windows said with a grim smile: "Mihri-Sultana the hour of vengeance is striking for me!"

Soon after the battalion had been placed around the palace, Rédif-Pasha boldly ascended the steps of the portico leading to the eunuchs' hall, followed by three officers, revolvers in hand. Having whispered an order to his companions, he opened the door with a pass-key and entered. At the noise he made on entering, the Nubians started from their sleep; for their ears are sharp and their slumbers light as those of the tigers of their native land.

"What do you want? Who are you?" cried one of the eunuchs leaping from the divan where he had been lying, and amazed at seeing men entering so easily the hall which he had locked.

"I am Rédif-Pasha," replied the general; "I wish to speak to the Sultan on important business; go at once and tell the kisagassi (chief eunuch) to come down immediately and take me to His Majesty."

"But, Your Excellency, everyone in the harem is asleep at this time of night."

"Go, I tell you. It concerns the safety of the empire."

The imposing air with which Rédif uttered these words silenced the eunuch who, having cast a questioning glance at his fellows went out to obey the order.

A few minutes had hardly elapsed when he reappeared with the kisagassi, a black of gigantic stature, hideous face, and misshapen form.

"Look here, now, Rédif-Pasha, what do you mean by waking me thus after midnight?" said the Nubian insolently. "Wallah! I had a great mind not to come down, if that beast Ali had not said that the message was important."

"It is well you came," said the general haughtily, "else I would have had you dragged out by my officers. Now then, you villain, go tell your master to receive me at once!"

"What's that? are you crazy, my poor pasha, or is your head too burdensome on your shoul-

ders that you dare awake His Majesty as you aroused me?"

"His Majesty is asleep then?"

"Just gone to sleep."

"Well then, learn that hereafter the caprices of the harem shall no longer rule in Turkey; this night of the 30th is the last of tyranny; and if you doubt my words, let your eyes convince you; come and see!"

While speaking, Rédif opened the door and from the piazza showed the stupefied eunuchs the troops surrounding the imperial dwelling.

The Nubians quailed, for their cowardice equals their insolence.

"Mash-Allah! we are lost," they cried trembling like women.

"Silence!" said Rédif fiercely in a terrible tone closing the door behind him: "the first who utters a cry dies!"

The eunuchs instantly ceased their shrieks; the kisagassi was motionless with terror.

"Did you not hear what I said? Go tell the Sultan that Rédif-Pasha must see him."

"Pardon me, Your Excellency, I can't arouse His Majesty; death is the punishment for such an *affront*!"

"Fear nothing for your life if you obey, but be quick for I follow you."

The kisagassi took a candle, but he trembled so violently that one of the officers had to take it out of his hands.

"You are not going to kill the Sultan?" asked the eunuch, his teeth chattering.

"I am not a murderer," replied the general scornfully; "come, show us the way."

The kisagassi slowly ascended the broad marble stairway leading to the first story. Rédif and his men followed. They traversed several deserted salons and finally reached the door of the Sultan's chamber. There the eunuch dared go no further; he turned imploringly to Rédif, saying:

"Have mercy on me, Your Excellency.... I dare not."

Rédif's only reply was to point his pistol at the kisagassi whom this threat compelled to open the door.

"At least," he said imploringly, "do not enter; His Majesty is not alone."

"Very well, we will wait, be quick!"

The door closed upon the eunuch, and Rédif-Pasha left alone with his officers, took some matches from his pocket and with the utmost coolness lighted the chandeliers of the salon.

He had hardly done this when Abdul-Aziz appeared at the chamber-door, half-clad but with the terrible look of an insulted sovereign.

"What are you doing here, Rédif?" he said with a dark frown.

"Your Majesty sent for the seraskier," replied the general bowing low; "but being occupied just now *in the service of the State*, he has not been able to obey your orders."

"And is that all you have to say, is it only to excuse himself that the insolent wretch dared arouse his sovereign?"

"If it were merely to present the seraskier's apologies, I would certainly not have taken the liberty of disturbing Your Majesty's precious rest," replied Rédif with an excess of politeness bordering upon irony; "but it is a question of much more important matters which each wasted moment endangers."

"Speak then, and quickly," said the Sultan, adding in a more gentle tone: "Is it a fresh plot against me?"

"Your Majesty is clear-sighted. You guess the news before it is told."

"And so it is you who come to tell me that I am about to be betrayed?" said Abdul-Aziz with distrust and agitation.

"I am glad to see that Your Majesty is so penetrating; only instead of saying, about to be betrayed, you may say openly that you are already betrayed."

"Betrayed, by whom? when? how?" cried the Sultan, who under the general's seeming calmness perceived restrained wrath and emotion. "Wallah! since when does one dare speak to me in riddles? Come, Rédif, explain, or I will make you remember that this morning I drove you from my presence."

"I have not forgotten it, Sire, neither I nor my colleagues; and if I disobey your orders in reappearing before you, it is I must confess because I would yield to no one the right of delivering to Your Majesty a letter I bring from your illustrious nephew."

"My nephew!" exclaimed Abdul-Aziz frowning and hastily seizing the paper which Rédif presented with a cruel smile and an obsequious bow.

At the first words the Sultan turned pale; he tried to smile ironically, the paper shaking in his hand; then crushing it angrily, he turned upon Rédif and his companions a glance full of rage and scorn.

"Cowards!" he thundered, "think you to frighten me with your vain threats? You dare

bid me renounce the throne, the empire, and submit to the rule of the Sultan my nephew?.... And pray how long has there been in Turkey another sovereign than I?"

"Since the weary people have shaken off the yoke of your tyranny," answered Rédif in a hoarse and bitter tone; "since the clergy have rejected you as their chief; since friendly nations have abandoned you as their ally; since the army has refused obedience; in one word, since Turkey has hailed Mourad as her Sultan, that is since this very night!"

The general had approached, threatening and terrible as the voice of fate. Abdul-Aziz looked at him in bewilderment as if he were the sport of a dream; but Rédif stretching his arm towards the windows opening upon the gardens, continued:

"If you doubt my words, Sire, look out of these windows; the palace is surrounded by a battalion commanded by our brave Salaheddin; the few supporters you still have are all in our power and unable to help you; the iron-clads are commanded by captains devoted to our cause, and you have no alternative except to submit promptly to the orders of your illustrious nephew."

The Sultan, for a moment overcome by Rédif-

Pasha's vehemence, was no doubt disposed to resist longer when a piercing shriek issued from His Majesty's chamber. The cry seemed to affect Abdul-Aziz more than the news of his downfall; at the same instant the door opened and a young woman half covered with a silken wrapper flung herself at the Sultan's feet.

"We are lost, Sire," she exclaimed; "we are lost, the angel of death is standing at the foot of the stairs!"

"Silence, woman!" said Abdul-Aziz, raising the Sultana.

"Her Highness has mistaken Salaheddin for the angel Azraël," said the general. "Sire, I implore you to decide. Moments are precious; all resistance is vain," he added, pointing to his three silent companions who, revolver in hand, guarded every outlet of the salon.

"So I must quietly obey my nephew's orders?" said the Sultan.

"You must, Sire!"

"Treason! infamy!" sobbed Mihri choked with tears, sinking upon a sofa.

"But I will summon help," roared Abdul-Aziz furiously; "I will not be intimidated into this infamous snare by your threats."

"*If you* call for help, Sire, if you cry out, Sul-

tana, when they come in, they will find only your dead bodies. . . ."

"You villain, would you dare murder us?"

"Yes, if necessary to save my country and my comrades."

"All my friends have forsaken me," said the Sultan with a shudder.

Rédif made no answer.

"My guards, my faithful guards have abandoned me," exclaimed Abdul-Aziz giving way to his despair.

"They were embarked to-night for the Marmora."

"It was they I saw on the transports. Allah! I felt my good fortune departing with those vessels."

"Come, Sire," said Rédif, "my friends are growing impatient, they perhaps doubt me owing to this long delay. . . A caïk awaits Your Majesty below." And seeing that the Sultan was still hesitating, the pasha opened a window and drew the monarch towards it; the Sultan leaning out could see that the palace was surrounded by the soldiery.

"Wretches!" he cried; "this morning they were in my pay, to-night they betray me!"

Then closing the window in disgust, he said:

"To reign over traitors is not worth a regret!" but his voice faltered as he spoke.

"Sire, are you coming?" asked Rédif with decision.

"I follow you, but it is not fear which makes me obey; it is the scorn I feel at living in the midst of treason."

Rédif beckoned to one of his companions, who went out and promptly returned followed by a eunuch bearing the Sultan's cloak and overshoes.

Abdul-Aziz leaned upon Aboushendi's shoulder while the latter fitted on his overshoes.

"Take care of Mihri-Sultana," he whispered to the eunuch.

Aboushendi bowed, speechless through terror; he fastened the cloak around the Sultan, who prepared to follow Rédif. Mihri, mute and wild-eyed, had witnessed this truly tragic scene. Starting up she rushed in front of the general, crying:

"Where are you going, traitor? where are you taking your sovereign?"

"If Your Highness does not let me pass," said Rédif-Pasha, "I shall be compelled to force my way with this revolver!"

And he pointed the weapon at the young woman.

"Let us pass, Mihri," said the Sultan more gently than was his wont to speak to her; "the least resistance on your part, the least cry you might utter would be a pretext to murder me. You see I do not defend myself; follow my example; Allah will punish the traitors you may depend."

Mihri bowed in token of obedience, but when her husband passed her, she seized the skirt of his coat and kissed it fervently.

"At least we shall soon meet again?" she said.

"Within an hour, madam," replied one of Rédif's officers, touched by the young woman's grief.

The Sultana leaned against the door-frame to see the Sultan depart. When she heard the great palace-gate close upon the sad group, she fell on her knees. She felt that her husband's dynasty was forever banished from the throne of the Osmanlees.

A hand laid on her shoulder made her rise with a shudder.

"Ah, it is you, Aboushendi!" she said, recognizing the Nubian.

"Your Highness, you have no time to lose in vain regrets," he said; "you must warn the other

sultanas to prepare to move at once without noise or murmurs, for to-morrow at daylight the palace must be ready for the reception of its new sovereign."

"And do *you* dare speak to me thus?" said Mihri reproachfully.

"Promptness and prudence alone can save your lives and those of the imperial princes; I speak as a devoted friend and a faithful servant."

"Ah! why did I not die this morning before our downfall!" sighed Mihri.

"Madam, you speak of death when it is necessary to sustain our master's courage in the bitterest trial a Sultan ever suffered! Your love alone can soften and make endurable a misfortune which is perhaps momentary. It is for you to calm his regrets and his rage. You speak of death. Did you not see how pale His Majesty turned when he saw Rédif-Pasha's revolver pointed at you? It was to save your precious life, for that alone that the Sultan made no resistance."

"Aboushendi, do you know where they have taken His Majesty?" asked Mihri, who had brightened at hearing the eunuch's words.

"*When* I helped our sovereign to enter his

caïk, I heard Rédif giving orders to the caïkdjis to row towards the Old Seraglio, and it is there we are to join him."

"At least we shall not be separated; but it is very cruel to have selected Eski-Seraï as the Sultan's prison; thence he will behold his capital and his regrets will be all the more bitter! Allah, Allah!" she added mentally—"thou who punishest the most secret faults upon the proudest heads, let thy wrath dwell on me alone, for I alone have sinned against thee!"

While Mihri, overwhelmed by this tardy remorse, trembled under the stroke of heavenly justice, slow but always unfailing, a crowd of half-dressed hanoums and slaves were running to and fro in the palace; they had been roused from their sleep like their master and hardly realized that this sudden waking was not a mere continuation of some evil dream. Lamentations and murmurs were heard mingled with the confusion inseparable from a palace revolution. The sultanas were packing up pell-mell their best jewels and dresses, and the eunuchs were removing the hastily-made packages which were tumbled into the large caïks stationed in front of the palace. Looking at the Bosphorus floating on its placid waves the thousand vessels at anchor in its port, no one would

have suspected that it bore on its bosom its downfallen monarch!

Thanks to the activity of the conspirators, the women were all embarked without much noise or disorder; fear had turned their loud cries into silent tears.

The Sultana-Validé, Mihri, and the other sultanas were placed with the children in a large caïk in which mattresses had been spread. Salaheddin took the helm, yielding to no one the right of watching over such precious captives. It was he who, seizing a long boat-hook, moved the boat from the shore, thus separating Mihri forever from the royal palace. The Sultana, who had watched him, sighed deeply when the rowers dipped their oars, and this sigh forced a bitter smile from the young man. Mihri saw it, and a feeling of shame and anger caused her to throw the end of her feradjé over her head to hide her features from her enemy's searching glance.

The passage was short and interrupted by sobs and imprecations.

The embarkation at Dolma-Batché palace had been easy; but the sea, being always rough at Old Seraglio point because of the cross and counter-currents, made the landing somewhat dangerous *there.* Salaheddin gave the helm to one of the

sailors and then wished to take the Sultanas one by one and help them to land; but they began to load him with abuse and insults, and at the risk of drowning they leaped ashore in great confusion. Mihri came last and tried to find support by resting her hand on the shoulder of one of her slaves, but the latter, unaccustomed to the boat's motion stumbled and fell overboard, almost dragging the Sultana with her. Mihri uttered a shriek, and before she could resist, Salaheddin seized her in his arms and lifted her to the shore.

"May Allah repay you for all you have done to me!" he said briefly, repeating the very words addressed to her by the unfortunate and confiding Aïsha.

The Sultana made no reply, but she shuddered at the remembrance of that dead friend evoked at so fearful a moment, and bending her head, silently followed the sultanas who were making their way through the gardens to the kiosk hastily prepared for their reception.

The Old Seraglio, former residence of the Ottoman Sultans, has nothing left of its splendor except nearly abandoned out-buildings. A mosk, a Turkish bath-house, and a small kiosk are all that was saved from the conflagration which destroyed the once immense palace. Its situation is

unequalled, and its lofty promontory commands a magnificent view. Eski-Seraï is a peninsula and juts out into the sea, a striking headland washed by the blue waves of the Marmora. A forest of lofty cypresses, the sombre trees dear to the Ottomans, forms upon its crest a dark mass from which the white minarets of the mosk and the slender turrets of Oriental buildings stand out in bold relief; on the slope of the hill scarred by the conflagration, a paltry English garden barely covers the nakedness of this sandy soil.

The sun of the 30th of May had hardly gilded the hill-tops and the domes of St. Sophia, when a salute of one hundred and one guns announced to Turkey that she had changed sovereigns without a drop of blood, without a single shot fired, without anyone's anticipating a *coup d'État* unparallelled in the empire's history. This revolution accomplished in one night caused universal admiration; the people felt then how little they had cared for Abdul-Aziz, and hailed with enthusiasm the preceding Sultan's son. Mourad was young and a guiltless captive; this was enough to make him popular; but in addition, he was brave and intelligent. His accession, which was the first step of his freedom, was loudly acclaimed by the *nation.*

The towers of the Seraskierate and of Galata, as well as the fleet, were at once covered with bunting; a rush of officers, orderlies and carriages clattered over the streets already encumbered with a wondering and delighted crowd. The population had trembled so long under the incubus of dark terror! and all at once they awoke to witness a triumph, to express their gladness, to enjoy, they fondly hoped, a prosperity as brilliant as the dawn of that beautiful day.

News flies like lightning. It was quickly learned that Mourad was to leave the Seraskierate to repair to his palace of Dolma-Batché. A double rank of soldiers lined the streets through which His Majesty was to pass, and behind this line of uniforms surged the multi-colored throng of Christians and Mussulmans who yesterday were about to fly at each others' throats, and to-day, united by patriotism, forgot their sects and remembered only their country. Turks, Arnauts, Greeks, Jews, and Rayas all felt happy at being Ottoman subjects. Unfortunately it was but a passing gleam of joy; for a terrible storm was brewing.

Three o'clock was striking when Mourad in a State carriage issued from the Seraskierate gates. He was alone, according to Turkish etiquette, and

wore a uniform plainly embroidered on the collar and cuffs. On his breast was the order of the Medjidié; he wore pearl-grey gloves—quite an innovation for a Sultan, and he kindly and gratefully saluted the crowd gathered to see him pass. The imperial carriage was followed by numerous mounted aides, whose faces though bearing traces of a sleepless night were bright with the joy of triumph. Among them Salaheddin almost smiling bounded on his curvetting Arab charger.

The brilliant cortège traversed Stamboul in the midst of continuous shouts of Yasha-Padisha and the music of the military bands stationed on its passage. It passed over the Kara-keuy bridge, near which are the landings of the numerous Bosphorus boats; there the Sultan was again hailed by the cheers of the inhabitants of the shore-villages who crowded into Stamboul to applaud his accession; then the imperial carriage continued its triumphal progress through the populous quarters of Galata, Top-hané, and Cabatash; at last His Majesty Mourad V. reached the great square of Dolma-Batché, where the gilded palace gates were opened wide for his reception.

Just as the carriage was about to pass under the sculptured archway a young officer of Abdul-Aziz's retinue, well known to Mourad, boldly ad-

vanced to the carriage door holding out a sealed paper. The young Sultan took it with eager emotion; the bearer was Hassan-Bey; the message must therefore be from Abdul-Aziz.

But public curiosity was soon satisfied, for that very evening the journals relating the incident gave the text of the missive which His Majesty desired to make public, no doubt in order to prove the continued existence of his august predecessor. The letter was as follows:

"*Majesty:*

"Permit the humblest of your subjects to be the first to wish you a long reign and a glorious future. I ask but one favor of Your Majesty: it is my life and permission to reside with my family in that same pavilion of Tchéragan which I had built for you.

"I pray Allah to enlighten Your Majesty's mind with His supreme wisdom, and if I dare give you a warning, it is not to trust too much in your army. I had sacrificed everything for mine, only to be betrayed by it.

"That you may live long and happy, Sire, is the most fervent wish of your respectful subject,

ABDUL-AZIZ."

The papers added that His Majesty Mourad V. had immediately granted his uncle's request, and that orders had been given to place the kiosk of Tchéragan at the ex-Sultan's disposal.

This letter of Abdul-Aziz caused great wonder; his resignation to his fate appeared a good omen, and he was considered lucky to suffer only deposition, for the cruel Ottoman customs had habituated the people to witness the death of all pretenders dangerous to the peace of the empire.

That very night, in spite of a drizzling rain, the whole Bosphorus and the city of Constantinople were illuminated; in a twinkling, the mosks adorned their minarets with triple crowns of light which glittered like sparkling necklaces; the shores and hills were marked out in luminous outlines, and the shipping covered their rigging and hulls with brilliant lights. A grand reception took place at the palace; the new sultanas had promptly taken the place of their predecessors, and a court still more brilliant than that of Abdul-Aziz crowded the harem salons yet warm with the perfumes of their fugitive occupants.

Meantime in the midst of the general illumination, the pavilion of Eski-Seraï alone remained in darkness. What cruel pangs must *have been felt* there at each new triumphant artillery

salute, at each coruscating sheaf of rockets which seemed ambitious to inscribe Sultan Mourad's glory in the sky itself! The occupants of that small palace had the front seats to witness the fête: the vessels sending up bursts of Turkish music rocked under their very windows; this gloomy kiosk was the doubly-dark background to the brilliant tableau. If the frailty of human power could be realized on a day of victory, the victor should always study it on the brow of the vanquished.

CHAPTER XVI.

DEATH OF ABDUL-AZIZ.

THE letter written by Abdul-Aziz to his nephew caused a deep sensation; the ex-Sultan's party hoped to profit by it, for in reality his submission was superficial. He had hopes of a prompt revenge; nevertheless when he found himself a captive at Tchéragan, and his own aides-de-camp were replaced by officers devoted to Mourad, Abdul-Aziz felt that he had no longer a chance to re-ascend the throne; then he overwhelmed with

reproaches and insults those who surrounded him, called aloud for his friends, and mourned the loss of his iron-clads. He seemed never to have appreciated the value of the power which he had lost until after the day of his downfall.

The Sultan's despair, which neither his mother's tenderness nor the affection of his wives could moderate, awakened fears for his already wavering reason and he was watched more closely to prevent any attempt at self-destruction. Abdul-Aziz's despair was all the deeper because he possessed none of those great virtues which aid kings in nobly bearing the burden of downfall. Oriental princes are rarely endowed with intellectual power; their education, obtained in the harem, is trifling. They are ignorant of life and the trials which other men have to encounter. Complete egotists, they think only of their own feelings and are concerned only at the obstacles which retard the gratification of a caprice as quickly forgotten as conceived. They have no right-minded pride, no real affection, and have not even a father's tenderness for their children.

A Sultan is therefore in an intolerable situation when he is deposed from the throne; this would seem to mitigate somewhat the rigor of the barbarous law which requires a new Sultan to step upon his predecessor's corpse before ascending the

steps of the throne; a Sultan is infallible, and can be overthrown only by death.

In the bottom of his heart Abdul-Aziz probably felt that he could not live an exile's existence within a step of his capital. It would be hard, no doubt, to be banished from his country; it was still harder to be a prisoner at the very gates of his own palace!

Five days passed thus. The first Sunday in June Abdul-Aziz, who had not slept since the fatal night of the 30th of May, was standing at early dawn in a small salon of the kiosk of Tchéragan, his hands clasped behind him. With sunken eyes and pale and haggard features, he watched the hues of dawn brightening the Bosphorus, rolling back the veil of mist and announcing a magnificent day. The Sultana-Validé was seated upon a divan, her eyes following with uneasy watchfulness her son's every movement, while Mihri, grown ten years older in a week, was shivering under a fur cloak, not with cold but with fever.

The Sultan resumed his unsteady strides up and down the salon; his limbs tottered with fatigue, but his eyes were sleepless.

"Mother, do you remember," he said hoarsely without halting, "that when I ordered the architect to build this pavilion he objected, saying that

on this spot was a holy dervish's tomb, and that to build a palace over a grave would bring us evil fortune? Do you remember?"

"Yes," said the Validé, "and Mihri, who at that time had not felt the pangs of remorse, laughed heartily at the prediction and urged you to continue the work."

"What is written—is written!" exclaimed Mihri, "and fate is implacable in its decrees; if His Majesty were not a prisoner here according to his own selection, he would have been so at Eski-Seraï, and I do not think that my advice has been fatal to him."

"Alas!" sighed Abdul-Aziz without making any other reply to the young wife's indirect question.

"My son," said the Sultana-Validé, "for my sake put aside your gloomy looks; cease your tottering, restless walk; it breaks my heart to see you in this condition. You are only the ghost of your former self."

"You shall not see me much longer wandering thus like a dismasted ship drifting at random. Allah will have mercy on me and give me courage to make up my mind."

"I hope so," said the Sultana, misunderstanding the meaning of her son's words.

"Yes, Allah is great; he will confound the traitors and will yet give you life and power."

Abdul-Aziz shook his head.

"'Hopeless forever!' is the motto of fallen princes. Have you ever heard of a dethroned king being recalled by his people?"

"It is not the people. . . . You have been the victim of an execrable plot!" cried Mihri. "Hassan-Bey told me so; there will be other plots in Constantinople, and he who thinks himself so firmly seated on the throne will not stay there long."

"Hush, woman! Do not invoke maledictions on the guiltless, and think rather of the blackness of your own soul!"

"Ah! Sire!" groaned the hapless Mihri, bursting in tears.

"For Allah's sake dry your tears; mother try to console her. Oh all this distracts me still more! I want to hear no more of plots, of friends and enemies. . . . I wish to know no more. . . . I want quiet. . . . I am weary of this life!". . . . Then controlling himself with some effort, the Sultan added in a calmer tone: "What I need is a little privacy. May I not obtain it? Not a moment of solitude! Always surrounded with watchful enemies or officious, importunate women!"

"Your Majesty!" "My son!" cried Mihri and the Sultana at the same moment, arising with an offended air.

"That is right, go to the harem," he said in a gentler tone; "I will stay here and rest on this divan."

"If you need anything, you will have us called?" asked Mihri leaving with reluctance and casting an uneasy glance around the room.

"My son, be calm, and above all drive away your gloomy thoughts," added the Validé going out slowly and reluctantly.

"Yes, be at ease both of you. Besides, Ismaïl-Bey who is there in the next room will watch me in your place. They don't lose sight of me" laughed the Sultan ironically, "they watch me close;" then he added carelessly: "Mihri send me a looking-glass and scissors to trim my beard."

"You shall have them, Sire; good morning."

"Farewell—Mihri!"

"Good morning, my son!" said the Validé.

"Farewell, mother!"

The two Sultanas went out—but full of agitation and uneasiness, they entered a room next to the salon in order to be at hand if he called. A

slave girl brought the Sultan the articles he had asked for.

"What is His Majesty doing?" asked Mihri, still uneasy, when the slave re-entered the room.

"He is seated on the divan near the window, trimming his beard, while Ismaïl-Bey is reading a newspaper at the other end of the salon."

"At least he is not alone!" said Mihri with a sigh of relief.

"I am afraid like you of leaving him too long with his gloomy thoughts," replied the Validé. "I have carefully removed all weapons."

"But why did he dismiss us?" continued Mihri gloomily; "alas! our very presence is a burden to him."

"Who knows? time perhaps "

The Validé was unable to continue; the noise of a scuffle, and cries uttered by Ismaïl-Bey terrified the two women who rushed to the salon door which they burst open.

"Allah! what has happened?" they cried.

A terrible sight met their gaze and struck them with terror.

Abdul-Aziz, extended upon the divan, was bathed in his own blood which Ismaïl tried in vain to staunch with his handkerchief; it flowed in streams from the Sultan's wrists, arms and

ankles, soaking his dress and the carpet, while his head already pale and motionless fell back on his shoulder.

The Sultanas rushed towards the hapless sovereign, but seeing their helplessness they joined their calls to those of the officer on guard, and soon a crowd of women and servants thronged the hall. In that terrible moment all forgot the inflexible laws of the Koran which forbid Moslem women to show their faces; the harem and the salamlik united to bind the Sultan's wounds and try to recall him to his senses.

The Válidé and Mihri had flung themselves upon the Sultan's body, sobbing and calling him by name. The other Sultanas in their despair broke the palace window panes and gratings, crying help and murder, not remembering that the waves of the Bosphorus alone echoed their shrieks, and that even if they were heard no one would have the boldness to penetrate the mysteries of the imperial harem.

While shrieks and groans filled Tchéragan with their ill-omened noise, a military surgeon was brought in by two slaves; as he bent trembling over his master's corpse, all eyes were fastened upon him; but the Validé's alone still had a gleam of hope, for mothers hope on to the last.

After having examined the wounds, the surgeon rose in search of the instrument with which they had been inflicted when Mihri, who until then had been kneeling in the blood, held up a small pair of bloody scissors.

"My scissors, my scissors!" she exclaimed and fell back fainting.

Ismaïl-Bey who had immediately been surrounded by suspicious and threatening women, explained with emotion how he had perceived too late the silent suicidal act of Abdul-Aziz; he sprang with a cry towards the Sultan who had already severed the arteries of his arms and wrists, and struggled for a moment with him trying to force from him the murderous implement; but the unhappy monarch quickly fell never to rise again. Such was the officer's narrative; the incredulous slaves cried: "Murder!" and Ismaïl had to be rescued from their hands and the palace with his clothing torn to shreds.

Did Abdul-Aziz commit suicide, or was he murdered? Such is the question that history will ask without being able to solve it.[1]

On learning his uncle's tragic death Mourad

1. The fact that Abdul-Aziz was murdered is no longer a question of doubt. See the translator's preface.

was seized with a nervous attack which threatened his life, and finally destroyed his reason.

Abdul-Aziz's body was laid out on a mattress, covered with a sheet, and transported to the Tchéragan guard-house, where all the surgeon's of the sanitary-board were summoned to verify the ex-Sultan's suicide. Their report was published in all the journals, and Abdul-Aziz was buried near his father, Sultan Mahmoud, and without official display to avoid causing a tumult. On the evening of the 5th of June the ex-Sultan's death was not yet known at the embassies or in the city; it was learned only the following day.

Abdul-Aziz's suicide caused a painful impression and this emotion was so general, even among those who had been his bitterest enemies, that no one believed it to have been an assassination.

A fortnight later the papers published the following paragraph: "The Sultana, mother of Prince—— has just died when about to give birth to another prince. The fearful emotions she suffered at the time of her illustrious husband's death, and her grief for her cruel loss, brought on the fatal illness which carried off in a few days the young and beautiful princess. The funeral of Her Highness Mihri-Sultana will take place to-morrow *at the mosk* Yéni-Djami."

A Mussulman funeral is rather an escort of friends to the last home than a religious ceremony; some mollahs go in front intoning verses of the Koran, and a numerous crowd press around for the privilege of bearing the coffin of the deceased for a moment on their shoulders; thus it passes from one to another, for everyone desires to share in this service. On the way from the house to the mosk and thence to the cemetery, the passers by take their part in bearing the bier for a few paces and then are relieved by new-comers. This last adieu, this last homage rendered to Death by every passing stranger seems a token of brotherhood, and an acknowledgment of the frailty of life.

On the 20th of June numerous priests chanting as usual chapters of the Koran walked in front of a rich cypress-wood coffin inlaid with mother-of-pearl, covered with a costly cashmere shawl and crowned with garlands of fresh and fragrant roses. After the long journey from Tchéragan to Yéni-Djami and some moments' halt in the mosk, they resumed their mournful march to Eyoub, the cemetery holy above all others. Numerous pashas, beys, officers, eunuchs, and agas followed the funeral which was said to be that of Mihri-Sultana; the coffin had had

many relays of bearers, one alone persisting in retaining his place; he was a staff-officer, the dead woman's brother, Hassan-Bey. With eyes all aflame, though sometimes dimmed by tears, and head erect, he proudly supported one of the corners of the bier heedless of the burden. The young man's feverish agitation excited his friends' compassion and they vainly endeavored to induce him to rest awhile. "I have so short a time to be with her now," he said glancing up at the coffin. "Poor sister! To die at twenty-six on the eve of being a mother...." added Hassan forcing back his tears.

At last Eyoub was reached. The funeral-train wound up the flowery paths of the hill, while numerous birds were singing on the cypress-trees. Numbers of Moslem women had gathered, and were sitting on the grave-stones to enjoy the lovely day under the shade of the great trees and in the peaceful calm of the abode of the dead. At the top of the hill, in a mound of turf overlooking the European "Sweet Waters," a fresh grave was dug. The priests, the bearers, and all the train rested, and the mollahs intoned fresh chants and prayers while the coffin was being let down to its bed of clay. Hassan helped in lowering the corpse with care as tender as a mother's in laying down her

sleeping child. "Mihri," he murmured, "here at least you will sleep in peace far from our enemies. T'is better to die than to be doomed to live with them as I do!"

The mollah cast the first spadeful of earth, then every by-stander came and cast one in his turn except Hassan who, leaning against a tree kept his eyes fastened upon the grave which by degrees was filled up to the top. Each one went away after having paid this last duty to the dead Sultana, and before he was aware of it the young officer remained alone still in the same position, forsaken like his sister.

"I swear to avenge you, Mihri!" exclaimed the Circassian in a low tone; "I will give you the joy of soon seeing the funerals of your enemies. When you hear the death chants over them, pray for me, for I shall be very near rejoining you! Farewell, sister, you shall not wait long! This moon shall not wane before new graves are opened here, and if Allah permit! I will be the cause of their being dug!"

Then Hassan, comforted by this thought of revenge, walked with firm steps down the steep path of the cemetery. Those who saw him pass, little imagining the murderous thoughts which haunted him, looked at him with eyes full of sym-

pathy; they had seen him proudly bearing his dead sister; they saw him returning with dry eyes and a lofty brow, and they said:

"Here is a true Mussulman; he knows how to submit to the decrees of Fate!"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CABINET-COUNCIL.

SULTAN ABDUL-AZIZ'S death excited Mourad in the highest degree; a trying sleeplessness, a low fever paralyzed his intellect; the physicians forbade him to attend to State affairs, and advised him to seek every possible diversion.

The grand-vizier and the ministers, prevented from holding their meetings at the palace, sometimes assembled at the Sublime Porte, sometimes at the Seraskierate, or else at the house of Midhat-Pasha, president of the Council-of-State.

Hussein-Avni-Pasha in consequence of the agitation among the military party in favor of Abdul-Aziz's son, resolved to banish all its chiefs on pretence of sending them to Herzegovina. Hassan-Bey was among the first to receive march-

ing orders. He was promoted to a captaincy in the 6th Army-Corps stationed at Bagdad. The Circassian declined accepting a promotion that separated him from his friends, and squarely refused to obey the order to depart. Hussein-Avni-Pasha put him under arrest. Hassan after four days confinement appeared more submissive and signified his readiness to repair to his new regiment; he was at once relieved from arrest, for he was to set out the next day.

As soon as he found himself free, Hassan dressed himself with care, threw on his caftan under which he concealed two revolvers, took a caïk and repaired to the cemetery of Eyoub; but this time he did not remain there long. He only muttered a few words over the mound crowned with a white marble monument inlaid with texts of the Koran in gold letters; he tenderly kissed the marble shaft, which rose in the shape of a lily from the head of the tomb, then hastily returning to the shore, he ordered the caïkdji to take him to Scutari.

Scutari is a very populous city rising like an Asiatic rival opposite to Stamboul. Its heights swarm with brightly-colored houses interspersed with hundreds of lofty white minarets. A dense cypress-forest borders the sea-shore for a long

distance, and through these funereal trees may be seen a vista of numerous mausoleums and white grave-stones, standing or prone, like a crowd of phantoms. Scutari and Eyoub are the two cemeteries where wealthy and pious Mussulmans are buried. Eyoub resembles a garden, for the sun floods it with its light, and flowers grow there mingled with shrubs and cypresses. Scutari is sombre and solemn; it is a dense forest in which every road and pathway is occupied by Death; daylight scarcely penetrates the dense foliage; no grass, no flowers grow there; nothing but moss separates the damp graves laid out side by side, close to each other and without order, in a repulsive contrast of elegance and decay. Here the white and gilded monument of a favorite young slave rises fresh and new by the broken tombstone of an ancient mollah. There time has thrown down the green and red turbans scattered in the dust, for the Turks are in the habit of erecting at the head of the grave a long stone surmounted with a red fez or a turban. From a distance, and especially in the night, these stones look like an army of Arabs wrapped in white burnouses and encamped in the woods of Scutari.

Scutari is the last headland of Asia, that

cradle of the Turcomans; an invincible attraction draws them towards it; thousands of konaks belonging to noble Mussulmans are located there, and Hussein-Avni was the owner of one of the handsomest. It was there that Hassan repaired only to find out from an aide-de-camp that the minister had gone to Stamboul to attend the cabinet council which was held that night at Midhat-Pasha's house. Hassan saluted the aide and returning to his caïk ordered the rowers to take him to the landing of Sirkedjé-Skelessi on the European side.

Night had fallen; Hassan took his way along the dark streets (for Stamboul is not blessed with gaslight), walking with a firm tread and a cruel smile upon his lips. He looked at his watch which marked eight o'clock; the council must have commenced its session; he quickened his steps and reached Midhat-Pasha's konak which was brilliantly lighted. On the ground-floor the agas, who had just finished their copious dinner, were sipping their mocha and smoking their cigarettes with that *kief*, that inimitable languor which is the superlative expression of indolent repose nowhere so thoroughly appreciated as in the East.

Hassan-Bey was well known; they saluted him and let him pass in without even asking where

he was going—for such are the freedom and hospitality of the East. Whoever is a friend of the household becomes its guest, almost its master; he comes and goes, gives his orders, stays several days, while probably during his absence other friends are doing the same at his house.

The salons were all empty; a single aga, seated at the end of the hall next to the council-chamber, was listlessly smoking his cigarette and occasionally looking at his watch to see if his turn of duty was approaching its end. The Circassian approached him unheard.

"Hassan-Bey!" he exclaimed with surprise; then saluting him respectfully, he added: "What lucky chance brings you here?"

"I leave for Bagdad to-morrow, and I desire to speak to the minister of war; I have important news to give him."

"But His Highness is at the cabinet-meeting," said the aga, pointing to one of the doors whose silk *portière* was down; "and with these blessed political discussions, Allah only knows what time the council will be over!"

At that moment loud voices were heard in the next room.

"That's the way they discuss the destinies of the country," said the aga with an ironical smile;

"all the ministers yell out, and he who yells longest and loudest carries his point."

The officer bit his moustache and tried to smile in response, but his lips twitched nervously like his fingers.

"Nevertheless I *must* speak to the minister," he said.

"Shall I inform his aide-de-camp on duty?"

"Who is it?" asked Hassan eagerly.

"Tewfik-Bey."

The Circassian drew a breath of relief.

"And Salaheddin-Bey?" he asked with some hesitation.

"He has just started on horseback for the Sublime Porte, I think; but I will go for Tewfik-Bey—only do me the favor to leave the vicinity of the council-chamber and to wait for us in the next salon, Bey-effendi."

Hassan made a semblance of leaning out of one of the windows of the salon, while the aga went down the stairs in search of the officer on duty. But he had hardly disappeared when the Circassian gliding on tip-toe reached the *portière* separating him from the council-hall, and slightly raising a corner of the silken hanging, he perceived the ministers seated according to rank around a table loaded with papers. Hussein-

Avni-Pasha, minister of war, was facing Hassan. He was a man of sixty, with regular features and white beard. His eyes were small and black—sharp and penetrating, although somewhat blinking. His extreme stoutness made him a good type of a Turkish Pasha. Next to him the minister of finance displayed his still greater bulk and his ruddy face; he had unbuttoned his coat to breathe more easily after the substantial dinner which had preceeded the council. The grand vizier Midhat-Pasha, president of the council, and Ahmed-Pasha, minister of the navy, had their backs turned to Hassan and were in animated discussion with Riza-Pasha, minister of justice, and the ministers of public-works and foreign affairs.

Casting a rapid glance over the personages just mentioned, Hassan drew from his belt two six-shooters and quickly raising the silken curtain he bounded like a bomb-shell into the midst of the council, shouting: "Death to you, vile, cowardly Hussein!" and fired at the minister of war, who received a ball in the chest but had nevertheless strength enough to rise.

At this onslaught of Hassan, all the Pashas except Reshid rose shouting: "Help!" "Help!" The Circassian seeming to single out Hussein-*Avni alone*, sprang at him, and with a stroke of

his yataghan dispatched the Seraskier, who rolled over dead at his feet.

Midhat-Pasha, who alone had retained some presence of mind during this unexpected attack, immediately opened a side door leading to the imperial harem the key of which he had in his possession; he was about to take refuge there with his colleagues, when Hassan, turning furiously at the noise made by the lock, rushed forward to prevent the ministers' escape. Ahmed-Pasha succeeded in stopping the murderer for a moment, and tried to take away his pistols. A ball in the shoulder made him let go his hold and he fled with the other ministers behind the door of refuge. The Circassian uttered a yell of fury on seeing his prey escape him. Reshid-Pasha alone remained, having fainted in his arm-chair. Blinded by rage, Hassan for want of nobler game turned upon the wretched pasha and fired a bullet into him. Reshid's reclining head did not indicate by the least motion that his swoon had given place to death.

Tewfik-Bey and the aga arrived at this moment greatly bewildered and not knowing whence the shots came. They saw with horror Hassan standing over two corpses, yelling like a maniac, and trying to burst in the harem door

which he was riddling with bullets. The aga ran off to call for help and Tewfik, drawing his sword rushed at Hassan. A howl of rage and a gush of blood simultaneously escaped from the terrible Circassian who, turning to the man who had wounded him, cried out: "You should learn to thrust better than that, Tewfik!" as he lodged a bullet in his brain. The unfortunate aide whirled around for a second and fell lifeless with a groan.

"I must have all your blood!" shouted Hassan furiously, still trying to burst in the harem door, and the shrieks and appeals of the frightened women mingled with the yells of the murderer.

Finally all the agas came up armed with swords, daggers, and pistols. Hassan was compelled to face these assailants, and at once made a breast-work of the table and the satin chairs which he piled up in front of him. He was resolved to sell his life dearly, and avoided with wondrous skill the attacks of his adversaries who had the advantage of numbers, but lacked the fierce and reckless courage which seemed to make the Circassian unapproachable; corpses strewed the blood-stained floor around him. Nevertheless Hassan was wounded, and numerous stains reddened his uniform.

"Another blow will finish him!" cried one of the agas rushing at the Circassian with his yataghan. The latter was already pointing one of his pistols, when a well known voice was heard amid the din of arms and stopped the weapon raised over Hassan.

"Stop! don't kill him! He shall not have a soldier's death, but the scaffold; not the sword, but the rope!"

And Salaheddin-Bey sprang over the barricade of chairs and tables which covered the murderer. Recognizing the aide-de-camp and hearing his words, Hassan turned livid. At one bound, Salaheddin was upon him and was first to seize him.

"Back, Salaheddin!" yelled Hassan, trying to shake off his enemy's grasp. This moment's pause sufficed to enable the others to surround and seize him.

"Yes, I will have you hanged, base murderer!" shouted Salaheddin. "I knew well that you were to die thus!"

One of the Circassian's hands was still free and held a pistol. Before it could be wrested from him he discharged his weapon at the officer's breast.

"You have forced me to it," said Hassan. "Why did you not let me be killed?"

Salaheddin sighed faintly and let go the Circassian who was finally overcome and bound.

"A surgeon, a surgeon!" exclaimed one of the agas in whose arms Salaheddin had just fallen.

"Not for me—it is useless!" said Salaheddin who felt himself mortally wounded, "but for *him!* He must live for the hangman!"

"Yes," said Midhat-Pasha who had just entered, "that man shall not escape our sentence."

"Again!" muttered Hassan whose rage seemed exhausted with his last shot. Then turning to Salaheddin who was lying on a divan:—"Will you forgive me?" he asked.

"You have just realized my dearest wish," replied the young man faintly; "in murdering Aïsha, your sister committed a hideous crime—but in killing me, you have done a deed of charity.... I forgive you."

Hassan, overcome and trembling more now than during the struggle, wished to throw himself at Salaheddin's feet, but he was dragged away: the surgeon was about to dress his wounds; his life was to be prolonged so that he might suffer condign punishment; Salaheddin's wish was to be realized.

No words can express the dismay produced in

Turkey by this assassination. It was the last stroke for the hapless Mourad. He yielded up to his brother a throne upon which his intellect had become hopelessly shattered.

On the very night of the ministers' murder, Salaheddin expired in great suffering.

CHAPTER XVIII.

RETRIBUTION.

ABOUT five o'clock on the second morning after that fatal day, an immense crowd thronged the square in front of the Seraskierate.

The Turkish hanoums, despite the early hour, had found time to make themselves lovely. They had covered their white yashmaks with a cashmere scarf, a customary thing in cool weather; but this protection against the dew was perhaps only a pretext to conceal the jewels which shone under the veils, for after the execution, there would be time for a promenade, and thus a pleasurable day would be completed. The children meanwhile were noisily playing under the trees from one of whose limbs the Circassian was to be

hanged, and itinerant traders had installed themselves for the sale of their merchandise, as if it had been a Baïram day.

At half-past five, the Ottoman flag was hoisted from the tower of the Seraskierate, and a long and loud roll of drums excited the emotion and curiosity of the crowd.

In front of one of the doors of the Seraskierate prison was stationed a small army wagon; suddenly the door opened and several soldiers appeared; then two men bearing a white burden advanced to the wagon and ascended it with difficulty. At this sight there was a movement in the crowd which swept this human sea towards the Seraskierate gates.

"There he is! there he is!" said many voices.

In fact the wagon was moving off slowly towards the main gate. Many men, guards, and officers followed on foot.

"Where is Hassan?" asked thousands in the crowd.

"He is the officer standing in the wagon."

"No, you are mistaken; he cannot wear a uniform, for he was stripped of it and degraded yesterday."

"Then he is probably that white burden *between* two zaptiehs" (Turkish police soldiers).

"Yes, that is he; they are carrying him, for he seems unable to walk."

At that moment the wagon stopped under the trees in front of the main entrance; and it was quite easy to recognize Hassan who, too weak to stand upon his feet was taken down by two zaptiehs.

He was clad in a long white robe falling to his feet and showing several bloody stains. Hassan wore no fez and his pallid head fell upon his right shoulder.

When the detachment of zaptiehs which accompanied the condemned man had reached the place just described, a profound silence fell upon the crowd so noisy only a moment before. A second roll of drums sounded, and a Cadi read aloud the death sentence. Hassan was motionless and seemed neither to hear nor see anything. The hangman was up in a tree trying the strength of the limbs, and was aided by an Arab who was pulling upon a rope to make sure of its strength.

The multitude were wondering that a man apparently so feeble had been able to make so many victims two days before. They did not know that Hassan, torn from a bed of suffering, welcomed death as a deliverance from the torments he was enduring.

The sentence having been read, a mollah approached Hassan and held out a page of the Koran for him to kiss. Then he was lifted up to the fatal noose which was fastened around his neck. A grey cap was slipped over his head and face, and the rope was drawn up.

A stifled murmur either of pity or of satisfaction arose from the crowd during the few minutes of the wretch's death agony. At last his frame stiffened, and his feet almost grazed the ground. A shereef came forward and unfolding a placard nailed it to the tree.

* * * * *

Two hours after Hassan's execution, a close carriage passed through the Seraskierate square, coming from Eski-Capou. It contained an old man and a coffin of green and odorous cypress-wood. The old man was Achmed, Mehemet-Pasha's former aga. The faithful servant had expiated his devotion to Aïsha-Hanoum by seven years' imprisonment. The coffin contained Salah-eddin's body, which the good old servant was taking to Salonica to bury it according to the young man's last wish by the side of his hapless bride. Faithful to her upon earth, he wished to *be at* last united to her in the grave.

Achmed, leaning out of the carriage window perceived the motionless corpse of the murderer surrounded by the gaping crowd, and quickly shrinking back, he exclaimed:

"Allah sometimes permits man's justice to precede his own. Allah is great and merciful!"

THE END.

APPENDIX.

Turkish Harem Life.

Every Turkish house is divided into two distinct parts, the salamlik and the harem, the former being reserved for the men, the latter for the women. This division exists in the palaces of the Sultan as well as in the houses of the simple artisan. In public carriages, tram-ways or trains, women have their reserved places, protected by a curtain from the gaze of the people. The thousands of women who are in the harems of the Sultan and of the princes of the imperial family are all slaves. There is not a single rich or well-to-do family in Turkey that does not possess a certain number of women and girl slaves. There are black and white slaves: the former from Central Africa and Nubia; the latter are Circassians, sold by their parents. This latter commerce is altogether free. As to the commerce of negresses, it is under the surveillance of the different consulates, and more especially of that of England.

The white slaves were formerly bought in Georgia and Circassia. Russia, since she has conquered Circassia, has prohibited this commerce; but many families have emigrated to Turkey, and they bring up several young girls to sell them as slaves. There are no longer public markets for slaves, and young girls are no longer bought

as formerly at the bazaar, but there are houses known by the authorities where they are exposed for sale. Children of some years old are sold by Circassian families; the price varies according to the beauty of the children, from some hundreds to thousands of piastres. In an ordinary time girls of fifteen or sixteen, and who are really beautiful, are sold for a hundred thousand piastres, over a thousand pounds. The ugly women are employed for domestic work, while those who are pretty are taught to sing, dance, and write.

The question of slavery is well understood by the different embassies at Constantinople. Ambassadors' wives visit the harems of the Sultan, of pashas and beys. They pass a whole day there sometimes, breakfasting and dining in the harems, being waited upon by slaves. Often on the very day that their wives are visiting the harems, the ambassadors send in a protest against slavery, having noted the arrival of a ship full of black slaves from Africa. As to the hundreds of thousands of white slaves who make up the harems, nothing is said of these. This slavery is one of the sources of the decline of Turkey. The law authorizes every Turk to marry four wives, and to have as many concubines as his purse will allow him. The Sultans, having renounced political marriages with Christians and with daughters of their subjects, live with slaves only. Those slaves who become mothers are raised to the rank of cadina, but never to the rank of wife, for the Sultan does not marry. In his quality of khalife, he is too much above a slave to contract a marriage with her. Abdul-Hamid has four cadinas. Besides, the Sultan Abdul-Hamid has, according to custom, for his attendants, forty young girls chosen from among the most

beautiful. They dress and undress him and accompany him to the bath: the cadina who displeases most is deposed. These ladies-maids bear the name of "odalisques," or "odaléuk" in Turkish. Those that become favorites with the Sultan are called "ikbal." The other slaves of the palace perform all interior duty; some are trained to dance and form a *corps de ballet;* others to sing, who are kept for that purpose only. Cooking is generally performed by men in Turkey, at the palace as well as in private houses the cooks are for the most part Armenians. The Sultan Abdul-Hamid is too fond of the harem, like his brother the ex-Sultan Mourad, and like his father, the late Sultan Abdul-Mejid.

As to the princesses of the imperial family, custom gives them the power of choosing their own husbands. They often go out in carriages, and walk out; they thus have every opportunity of selecting a husband, who is, generally speaking, a young "bey" of good family. Very often the youth learns his fate when it is decided that he is to marry a princess. When the princess has selected some one she informs the mother of the Sultan, and the latter informs her son. The young "bey" is not always pleased, but he must pretend to be so; if he shows any signs of displeasure he is exiled and his family ruined. From the very moment that a young man is selected by a princess, his life cannot be called his own. He is raised to a high rank, in the army generally, as Turkish princesses have a weakness for uniforms; but he must be very careful in his behavior, for all his actions are noticed up to his marriage, which takes place several months, sometimes two years, afterwards. A young man of seventeen was chosen by a princess, and he was made a general of division. Three

days after he paid too much attention to a young girl, and for having done so he was degraded. He left the country and lived in Paris. On his return to Constantinople he was so badly received by every one, that he started for Egypt, and would not now return to Constantinople for worlds.

The gardens of the harems are protected by walls raised to a great height. The doors of the harem, as well as those of the salamlik, are never locked. In the daytime no beds are to be seen; they are only got ready at night. The bed is most simple—a mattress laid on the floor, and two sheets and a pillow. The next morning these things are placed in a room on purpose; there are no cupboards of any sort. The general aspect of the harem is *triste*, there being nothing to relieve the eye. The sons of pashas, beys, and effendis marry young. Living in the harem in their infancy, when they are fourteen years old they demand an odalisque, who is, generally speaking, a slave from the harem of their father. The young girl at once is freed from all want, dressed in the choicest of dresses, and, should she later on give birth to a child, she becomes a "hanoum." If, on the contrary, she has no child, she is sold again at a loss to the original owner. The young man takes another slave, and continues doing so till he becomes a father. The wife of a pasha has the title of hanoum effendi; her authority in the harem is great, almost absolute. The master of a house, pasha, bey, or effendi, and his children are, like the Sultan, served by slaves, who attend them while they take their baths, and render all manner of other service.

The child of a slave has a share in the fortune of its *father. Infanticide* is in no way punished in Turkey,

though there are thousands of cases in the country. Out of twenty marriages in Turkey fourteen are made with slaves, and the other six with free daughters of Mussulmans. It is somewhat rare to find a hanoum who is able to read well: they, for the most part, know only how to sing, dance, and play on some instrument. They only really care about their toilet.

The lower classes alone in Turkey have preserved their virtues; the upper classes are all more or less depraved. The Vizir Fuad-Pasha once said, in pointing to the wall of a harem: "As long as that wall lasts we shall remain unfitted for modern progress." What is too true unfortunately in all this is, that neither the Sultan, pashas, beys, nor effendis have the desire to accomplish this reform, for they are too fond of the harems.—*Extract from European periodical.*

Slaves in the East.

(Correspondence of the Manchester Examiner, 1881.*)*

The headquarters of the white slave trade in Constantinople are in the Bostandji quarter, which comprises a number of small, narrow streets between Pera, Galata and Top-hané. The trade is conducted almost exclusively by a tribe of Circassians known as Tessirdjis. Families generally work together. One brother, for example, stops at home and minds the shop, while the other goes and purchases and forwards the raw material of the commerce. Negotiations with purchasers are conducted through the intermediary of Arab brokers, who call regularly on their patrons to inquire if they are

wanting anything in black eunuchs or white girls. The rendezvous of these gentry is a coffee-house in the Bostandji quarter, the entry to which is strictly forbidden to all save followers of the Prophet. A white boy, in good health, from eight to fourteen years old, costs from $180 to $200; if he has any acquirements, such, for instance, as a knowledge of cookery, or other housework, he will command twice as much. A girl under ten years old may be had for $100, while a maiden between twelve and sixteen, especially if she can read and write and strum a little on the zittar, is worth $3,500. A female slave of exceptional beauty, young, white, and a virgin — the style most in vogue are blondes with black eyes — fetches from $4,400 to $6,000. For a choice specimen, with a smattering of French, and able to play a few airs on the piano, a rich amateur has been known to pay as much as $12,200. But, as may be supposed, the demand for articles of this description has greatly fallen off since the halcyon time of perpetual loans and profuse expenditure. Black slaves, who are brought principally from Africa, are either sold direct by the importers to the proprietors of harems or to dealers, two of whom have extensive marts in Stamboul. These two generally keep on hand 100 to 120 slaves each. There are also depots in Scutari, and in several villages on the Bosphorus. A strong black slave sells for about $90; a black maiden, $67 to $75; a eunuch, $315 to $400. Not the least interesting part of the account from which I quote is the writer's description of his visit to a slave-dealer's den in the neighborhood of Scutari, the exact locality of which he was sworn not to reveal. His companion was an Arab broker, whom he had to backsheesh heavily for his services. He assumed

the character and presented himself in the garb of a Hungarian renegade officer in the Turkish army, the ostensible object of his visit being the purchase of a halaiks or house slave. The slave-dealer's warehouse was a large wooden building; the slave dealer himself, a dignified Turk of the old school, bearded, turbaned and loftily polite. Pipes and coffee were of course produced, and, after a due interchange of complimentary phrases, business began. The dealer's head man, Hassam, a gigantic Nubian, was summoned and told to bring forth a number of slaves for the inspection of the broker and his friend. Thirty negro women, of various ages, and a number of boys were then led into the room. These the broker, who had really a commission to buy two or three slaves, looked carefully over, made them open their mouths, pinched their ribs, tried their wind and examined their "points" as a horse-dealer examines the points of an animal which is offered to him for sale. In the end two women and one boy were selected as suitable for their purpose. Then began a long and almost interminable wrangle. The dealer asked $900. The broker laughed him to scorn and offered him $60. Whereupon the Turk waxed scornfully indignant, but in consideration of the rank of his guests offered to come down to $220. Then more coffee and fresh pipes were ordered, and, after a tremendous palaver and an immense consumption of tobacco, the lot was knocked down for $190. The purchase, it was agreed, should be sent for and the dealer's little bill settled on the following day.

Chief of the Eunuchs.

"A CORRESPONDENT of the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, writing from Pera (1881), describes at length a remarkable ceremony, which seems to be curiously out of place in Europe — the installation of the new Chief of the Eunuchs over the harem of the Sultan. It was a genuine piece of old Turkish conservatism. The name of the new 'Kis-Agassi,' or Head Eunuch, is Stasis Behram Aga. The Turkish journals give long descriptions of the function, and publish odes and chronograms in honor of the hero and of the great event. The poets expect to gain something in return for their amazing adulation. The new dignitary holds a very lofty and influential position in the system of the Porte; only three persons stand higher than the Head Eunuch — namely, the Sultan himself, the Grand Vizier, and the Sheikh-ul-Islam; but he, from his position, frequently exercises a more direct influence upon the Sultan, and thus upon Turkish politics, than either of the other two eminent officials. The new 'Kis-Agassi' was received at the imperial palace of Dolma-Batché with the most gorgeous pomp. All the sentinels of the imperial harem, armed with halberds, formed a *spalier*, and 'His Excellency Behram Aga, Chief of the Eunuchs,' rode past on a beautiful charger, the orders of the Osmanieh and Mejidié glittering on his breast, followed by Ahmed-Bey and a number of the adjutants of the Sultan. When he arrived at the gate of the palace, lambs were slaughtered before him as a token of welcome. He was received with the greatest awe by the religious and domestic servants of the imperial household, including the most reverend the Imaum of the

Palace and several distinguished mollahs—perhaps chaplains in ordinary to His Ottoman Majesty. The Sultan sent across to his new official two symbols of office, a written document and a magnificent silver pastoral staff worked in relief, which is never handled by any but the agas of the imperial harem. The new Head Eunuch solemly kissed the parchment and the staff. The imperial 'hatt' was read, some prayers for the blessing of Islam upon the new pastor of the Sultan's women were said by the clergy, and then the new 'Aga of the Sublime House of Blessedness,' as the Sultan's 'hatt' calls him, was allowed to enter the harem and inspect his future dominion."

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